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EVENINGS WITH THE PROPHETS:

A Series

OF

MEMOIRS AND MEDITATIONS.

BY

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CHELTENHAM.

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PREFACE.

THE intention of the Author in this volume is only in part indicated by the title page. It has not been simply to write a biography of the Old Testament prophets, though that has been aimed at; but also to recall and enforce the most valuable lessons of their lives, as well as present an outline of their most remarkable prophecies. The object has not been to prophesy on the prophets—a too common custom of the times; but to record their predictions and to ascertain their import, as far as one portion of Scripture throws light upon another, or history has shown their meaning by their fulfillment. Wherever the sense has been considered doubtful, there has been no desire to dogmatize, but an endeavour to explain. God is his own best interpreter; and as the varying events of every rolling year and new phase of providence are pouring fresh light on many of the obscure portions of the sacred writings, so it has been felt that it is wiser to wait for certainty than to rush into the quagmires of mere conjecture.

There is to be found in every human bosom a reverence for the good and excellent—an admiration of the sublime and beautiful. Men feel honoured by mingling in the best society, and pleased as they gaze on the grandest scenery and loveliest landscapes. The Author of these pages has attempted to introduce his readers into the fellowship of some of the noblest characters ever sent into this world—has endeavoured to revive the ages in which they laboured—has besought them to proclaim anew their divinest truths, to live again their purest moments, and to recount their boldest deeds and sorest sufferings. The Writer's purpose has been, to realize the state of the world during this period of the prophetical era, especially in connection with God's ancient people—to sketch the history of some of the kings and leading men of those times—to glance at a few of the more prominent cities and countries, and to direct attention to the elements both of their strength and weakness, their rise

and fall. And as the predictions of the advent of Messiah run, like a stream of molten gold, from the commencement to the close of the Old Testament, so the gospel of the prophets has been stated, and their references to Christ and his kingdom have been pointed out.

The various authors who have been consulted in the progress of this work, and whose assistance has been gratefully accepted, have not all been acknowledged. This could not with propriety be done. Still, in every instance where the statements made have required to be authenticated, the different authorities have been given. Throughout the whole, the chief concern has been to instruct—to bring together, in as small a compass as possible, an amount of information on each subject which would save the ordinary reader much time and research—to endear to his heart the wonderful and diversified contents of the Book of God, and to help him in his appreciation of some of its most important doctrines, prophecies, and histories.

It is believed, that as in this practical and pushing age the most remarkable discoveries are only valued in proportion as they do much work in little time and with little labour, so the information collected and condensed in these pages may not be without interest, and can scarcely fail to be useful in assisting pious parents in the instruction of their children, students in searching the Scriptures, the Sunday-school teacher with his class, and the general reader whose means of arriving at a knowledge of many of the facts and references of the word of truth are necessarily limited. The Author readily acknowledges how defectively he has realized his own design. Nevertheless, he fondly hopes that these "Evenings with the Prophets" may become the handbook of many a happy and useful hour, both with young and old. With respectful deference to public opinion he publishes this volume, entreating for it a kindly perusal, and praying that God may make it subservient, in numbers of instances, to the furtherance of his kingdom and glory.

CHELTENHAM,
2d October, 1854.

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EVENINGS WITH THE PROPHETS.

MOSES,

THE PROPHET OF THE LAW.

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It is evening. Over the peaceful waters of the Nile have imperceptibly crept the darkening shadows of the approaching night. Rosy-coloured clouds hang like lovely curtains around the bed of the setting sun; the pure sky above is reflected in the bosom of the far-spreading water; one or two stars, harbingers of hope, ere yet the darkness has cast its veil over the earth, now sparkle and shine; not a breath of air stirs a leaf or ripples a wave; the season invites to reflection—it is evening.

There is a repose peculiar to evening. Nature appears to dedicate it to meditation. As its shades fall gently over the face of creation, outward activity gradually ceases, the mind returns upon itself, the past and present stand before us, and, as the twilight lingers, unconsciously we are drawn into a review of the day rapidly retreating, from this to others long departed, till the whole being becomes absorbed in pensive contemplation. Friend after friend is remembered—event after event of bygone years. History helps memory, and memory

recalls the facts of history; till distance, lending enchantment to the view, leads us to the realization of characters and circumstances, animating with unwonted interest the records of other times.

Our first meditation introduces us to the earliest providence in the checkered life of Moses, the prophet of the law. Behold, in yonder little ark, "made of bulrushes and daubed with slime and pitch," he lies by the water's brink, a helpless babe. Already the basket moves with its precious burden, for the waters begin to rise. Hard by, tired with long waiting, a little girl earnestly looks on the moving vessel. She has been set to watch, and she watches now with a solicitude which makes her sister-heart to throb and heave. "Oh, will none come to pity and to save my brother!" is at once her half-expressed prayer and anxious utterance. A band of mirthful maidens draw nigh, encircling one of princely mien. The heat of the day having fatigued them, they come to bathe. They pass along the water's brink, to some place retired and solitary. As they advance, happy and cheerful, in an instant they stand still. Near them they see floating, amongst the flags of the river, a little ark. Pharaoh's daughter, for such it was, with her attendants, commands one of them to fetch it. She is immediately obeyed. The cover is removed—it is found to contain "a goodly child; and, lo! the babe wept."

The compassion as well as the curiosity of woman is proverbial. The heart even of a Pharaoh's daughter is a woman's heart. She gazes upon the infant till her soul is melted within her. But what could she do with him? Miriam, the sister of Moses, now approaches the interested circle; she reveals no relationship, but asks whether she should go and call a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child? She is sent. Miriam had no difficulty as to whom to bring. The mother of Moses arrives. What anxiety, what fears, what hopes,

conflict within her! She is given the child to nurse, and he becomes the adopted of Pharaoh's daughter. From a frail ark, he now finds a palace for a home. But to all generations, in remembrance of this providence, he must bear the name of Moses—because he was drawn out of the water.

How long, indeed, the cruel decree of this Pharaoh, "who knew not Joseph," had existed—"that all the male children of the Israelites should be cast into the waters of the Nile to perish"—cannot easily be determined. It is probable that it was issued some sixty-two or sixty-three years after the death of Joseph—thus accounting for the security of Aaron, the brother of Moses, from a like exposure to himself; he being three years his senior. It would thus occur about the thirty-second year of the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt, and about one hundred and thirty years after Jacob's taking possession of the land of Goshen. The design of the decree itself is sufficiently apparent. The people were increasing too rapidly, not to occasion uneasiness to the tyrant who now occupied the throne. But does he think to thwart the purposes of Him by whom kings reign? The moan of every distressed Israelitish mother, by the waters of the Nile, enters into the ear of the Almighty as a prayer—a prayer which is sure to be heard, and the answer to which must bring down punishment.

Such was the Eastern question, at the time when Moses was born. Jacob had long been gathered to his fathers, after having blessed his children and children's children. Joseph too was dead. The remembrance of the years of plenty, followed by the years of famine, and the wisdom of Joseph in the former to save Egypt during the latter, had passed away. His name had ceased to be revered. His kinsfolk in Goshen (a land given to them by a previous Pharaoh), a simple, industrious, and prosperous people, begin to cause alarm. At first they are enslaved. Bondage has generally been

connected with a reduction of the population, and Israel's oppression was cruel and continuous; but God was with them, and they increased and multiplied. Severer measures still must be adopted. The male children of Israel must be put to death—their females must find husbands amongst the Egyptians—they must cease to be a separate people—the nation must be one; there must be no fear from Israel. Vain effort! man plans, but it is God who purposes. The very daughter of this same Pharaoh saves the Hebrew child who is to be the future emancipator of Israel from Egypt.

The parents of Moses were Amram and Jochebed, both of the tribe of Levi. Here we see how in Aaron, afterwards High Priest, this tribe, from the time of Israel's nationality, became the priestly tribe, until the period when that nationality ceased; and once more, in Christ, as also in his followers, king and priest became united. The life of Moses covers an era of one hundred and twenty years. It consists of three epochs, each of forty years. Our attention must now be directed to the earliest of these periods.

THE EDUCATION, CHOICE, AND FLIGHT OF MOSES.

Few are the materials afforded us, by which to judge of the early education of the leader and law-giver of Israel; but these few are very significant. From his birth, he was with his mother. It does not appear, though Moses was now known as the adopted child of Pharaoh's daughter, and still providentially associated with his own parents and the people of Israel, that the secret was divulged of the relation between the nurse and the child. Yet who can doubt, but that Jochebed, from the first, instilled into his soul all she knew of Jehovah, and of his covenant and doings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Who can doubt, but that she narrated to him all the history of Joseph and his brethren,

which must have been familiar as household words to the immediate descendants of Jacob's sons, and which afterwards Moses so beautifully transcribed? Who can doubt, but that he was informed of all the circumstances which brought Israel down to Egypt, how they were possessed of the land of Goshen, and how God had prospered them? Nor can it for a moment be supposed that, as he grew, she neglected to tell him how Pharaoh had enslaved his kindred, had deprived them of all their rights, had trodden under foot their very humanity, and how, but for the good hand of God, he himself, like other Israelitish children, might have found a watery grave. And as she perceived his young heart kindle with the flame of a proper patriotism, she could not fail to remind him of the covenant and promises of God to their fathers yet to be fulfilled.

The mother, indeed, who nurses her own child, is in many respects the most efficient of teachers. To her is accorded the opportunity of directing the first outgoings of mind after knowledge—those fresh and vigorous shoots which have so much to do with the formation of the future man. Her very face is the first volume of infant study. From the earliest dawn of intelligence the child reflects the mother's smile and reacts her frown. Inquiry succeeds inquiry. The lullabies of infancy, family names, family incidents—all are lessons which no after events can ever fully efface. And when, as amongst an oppressed people, an occasion was likely to arise for her son to be useful to their relief, as the mother of Moses might anticipate would occur, it was not probable that she would let slip the opportunity of indelibly impressing upon his mind his own origin, Israel's history, their former honour, their present oppression, and their future expectations. Here most unquestionably we have the primary elements of that education which went, under God, to make and mould

the manhood, afterwards so nobly developed, of Moses, the prophet of the law.

Important however as it is, to trace these early steps in the construction of one of the noblest characters whose history has adorned the annals of the human race, still they point to only one source of his education, though a most momentous one. We must not overlook the others. We are especially informed, that he was instructed "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Nor can it be forgotten that about this time Egypt was the home of science, the nursery of philosophy, and the school of art, such as they then existed in the world. As to the wisdom of Egypt, that indeed may be justly doubted. Its base and degrading idolatry, its superstitions and priestcraft, associated with the tyranny of its rulers as overriding all—these stand out in Egyptian story, as anything but favourable indications of an educated, a wise, and a high-minded people. But the world was young then. And to enjoy such instruction as could be found in it—whether in the mathematics or astronomy, or even in metaphysics —towards Egypt, from all lands, the lovers of learning bent their footsteps. Nor did this end with the exodus of Israel. Long afterwards, thither went both Greek and Roman philosophers, to be taught a purer system of ethical instruction than had previously existed, through what had transpired by the one living and true God appearing on behalf of his chosen people.

In these schools of Egypt, Moses appears to have been carefully trained. We linger not over the knowledge he might thus obtain. He was previously so instructed, that their superstitions could not influence his mind or gain his affections. He clung to the religion of his fathers. How happy and powerful parental instruction! In other respects, the development of his intellect, the exercise of his memory, the dedication of himself to the acquisition of knowledge, such as his

opportunities amply afforded, could not fail of being useful. Years, too, continued to unfold and even increase the beauty for which as a child he was so remarkable. Many particulars are recorded by historians, such as Josephus and others, both of his appearance and doings in his early years—how he grew in favour at court, being lovely to look upon as an angel; and how he distinguished himself as a leader and commander in the Egyptian army, obtaining several distinguished victories over the Ethiopians. Of these latter, however, Moses gives us no account. Of his personal appearance we are informed by the protomartyr, Stephen, in the Acts of the Apostles, that he was "exceeding fair."

Well can we conceive of this Hebrew youth, in the court of Pharaoh, full of interest and honour, to what temptations he must have been exposed—how much from envy he must have suffered—how much of adulation he received, fearfully calculated both to deceive and to destroy. Courts have never been scenes very favourable to the growth of true wisdom, not to mention true piety; much less likely would the court of Pharaoh be adapted to such a development. But God, the God of his fathers, was with the lad: and where his Spirit is, there is the possession of a nature altogether superior to the deteriorating influences of outward circumstances—a nature which can control circumstances, forming them for itself instead of being formed by them—a nature which can thrive in a desert, flourish in a palace, and sing in a prison; which can walk unscathed in a fiery furnace, and live unhurt in a lion's den. This was the Spirit that illumined, guided and inspired Moses—and through which, amidst the temptations incident to youth, and to youth exposed in a corrupt court, he was enabled to pass uninjured. We are inclined to the belief, that very largely the favour which historians tell us from his earliest days Moses

enjoyed—the attractiveness of his person (so attractive, that it is said people when engaged in their common avocations would desist to gaze upon his countenance)—has reference to his distinguished character as well as beauty; the former, indeed, always the guardian and often the parent of the latter.

We are struck with the paucity of reference in the sacred narrative to Pharaoh's daughter, Moses' mother by adoption. If he had nothing good to say of her, he says nothing evil—no mean manifestation both of gratitude and wisdom. In a few sentences from his inspired pen, he sums up the records of the first forty years of his life. Others, in the sacred pages, give us more information than he has done. Stephen, before the Jewish Sanhedrim, makes marked reference to him in this period of his history, as a man "mighty in words and deeds"—so that, in some form or other, opportunities had been granted him of distinguishing himself both by eloquence and in action. The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, is still more minute. As the adopted son of a princess of royal blood, and clearly with the sanction of Pharaoh, her father (as may be inferred from the very silence of Scripture on the matter, as well as from what Paul says of his prospect of enjoying "the treasures of Egypt")—it is generally admitted, that even the crown of Egypt was not beyond his grasp. Here, however, we are summoned to a study of the man of God. When he had reached an age in which he was fully able to appreciate all these advantages, and at that time of life when ambition especially fires the soul and takes possession of the man, he turned his back upon every such worldly prospect, and "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

This is not the way of the world; these are not prospects which men dash from them as unworthy of them. Treasures and thrones are not thus despised.

No toil has been esteemed too great, no danger too imminent, no scenes of carnage and bloodshed too terrible, to be endured for their possession. But Moses would have none of them. Motives leading to actions so unlike the common course of human choice, well deserve careful consideration. Nor, indeed, are they motives drawn from the present world at all—it is this which stamps them noble. Beautifully has Paul thus expressed this sacred truth: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

We first find the marked preference of Moses for Israel over Egypt, in an outburst of fatal indignation at the tyranny of the latter and of sympathy for the suffering of the former. He pays a visit to his brethren, and looks upon their burdens. Whilst there, a case of cruel outrage on humanity occurs in his presence. He witnesses an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew; or, as the language implies, cruelly maltreating "a Hebrew, one of his brethren." Who could see a kinsman thus abused, unmoved? Moses could not; and though the issue was more fatal than he had designed, yet we wonder not to find him defending his countryman, and smiting the Egyptian in return; but, alas! he slew him. We say, we do not believe that he intended to proceed thus far; although from the fact—a fact, we think, which must have been rumoured far and wide—of his having rejected his relationship with the daughter of Pharaoh and all its advantages, and of his casting in his lot with his enslaved countrymen—he had reason to suppose, as Stephen intimates, that his brethren would have understood "how that God by his hand would deliver them." In this, however, he was de-

ceived. He buries the Egyptian in the sand. Next day he again visits his countrymen. A far different scene now met his eyes, yet one on which he could not look an uninterested spectator. Common oppression ought to make divisions to cease amongst brethren. A common wrong ought to issue in united action for a common good. Moses doubtless felt this—as who does not, who reflects?—and seeing two of his brethren "striving" together, he said to him that did the wrong, "Why smitest thou thy fellow?" And he said, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Moses was not aware that what had occurred the day before was known. But murder will not hide; no, nor manslaughter. Human life is a sacred treasure in the eye of Heaven, and wonderfully does Providence in every age proclaim its sanctity. Moses was struck with fear. Once let Pharaoh become acquainted with the occurrence, and he must die. So he fled into the wilderness of Midian, even so far as an eight days' journey.

Go, chosen of God! thou art not yet fully educated for thy high and holy calling. Thou must be taught self-control and submission. Onward to the wilderness! Humble thyself there. Thou must know more of thy God; thou must know more of thyself. The solitude of a wilderness has been the school of many a glorious preparation for illustrious work. Thine is all to come. Away! commune with rocks, count the sands, listen to the still voice of solitary nature. Away! thou shalt not be all alone, yet most alone—keep cattle; guard them from the wild beasts of the desert; seek out for them pasture, and water, and shelter. Thou shalt have a home in the desert, and a companion, and children; all thy nature, individual, social, shall be cultivated; thou hast made thy choice, and must pay its penalty. Yet fear not, Moses! thy forty years of life in the land of Midian shall prepare thee for forty years to follow,

of a life the most illustrious and immortal in the annals of manhood.

MOSES IN THE WILDERNESS OF MIDIAN.

The land of Midian consisted of part of Arabia Petræa, situated on the borders of the Red Sea. The district towards which Moses journeyed, when he fled from Egypt, was that in the immediate neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, where in after time he was to receive so many and such distinguished tokens of the divine presence and favour. Josephus informs us that the male population of this district were largely addicted to commerce. They possessed themselves indeed of flocks, but were accustomed most commonly to leave them in the charge of the women. There were some who had their shepherds, but they in general consisted of an idle and somewhat ill-regulated class of men, who often gave great annoyance to the females that tended the surrounding herds. The nomadic tribes of these parts, in these early times even as in later days, had over them as ruler a chief, who appears to have been both priest and patriarch. Their form of government was primitive and their habits simple. At the period to which our narrative refers, the Emir or prince of Midian was Jethro.

Moses was now tired with his journey, and had sat himself down by the side of a well. The hour had arrived for watering the flocks. Numbers came. Among others, the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove their father's cattle to the well. Jethro had seven daughters. They filled with water the troughs, that the cattle might drink. Some of the neighbouring shepherds, with their flocks, had also now approached. They began to drive the cattle of Jethro from the troughs, that their own herds might first drink and depart. The mind of Moses was never formed to wit-

ness oppression and wrong, without sympathizing with the oppressed and desiring the punishment of the wrong-doers. He could not behold the strong thus injuring the weak, without at once interfering, heedless of the issue. Instantly he sided with the daughters of Jethro, and helped them, and speedily they watered their flock. Their return to their father's house so much sooner than usual led to inquiry. Reuel, or Jethro, (for he is spoken of as bearing both of these names,) is informed that an Egyptian (for such the daughters of Jethro considered Moses) had delivered them out of the shepherds' hands, and assisted them to draw water. Their father reflected upon them for their inhospitality, in not inviting him to their house. Moses is sent for to "eat bread" with them. And thus, in the good providence of the God of Israel, his servant at once finds a home; in that home, in after time, a heart that can return love for love, and the enjoyment of a quiet refuge and resting-place for another forty years. Moses becomes the shepherd of the flocks of Jethro, "being content to dwell with the man; and he gave Moses Zipporah, his daughter." A simple but beautiful testimony is this, to the high esteem in which the Prince of Midian held the character of this Israelitish refugee.

The monotony of a shepherd life, in the wilderness of Midian, does not afford many stirring incidents worthy of record in the history of our prophet. He was honoured to become the father of two sons—the one "Gershom," or "a stranger in a strange land," and the other "Eliezer," or "my God, my help:" names, these, which afford us an instructive insight into the heart of Moses during this portion of his lifetime. First, he feels his estrangement from Israel and Egypt; and he cannot but embody its utterance even in connection with the birth of a first-born son. But time, the great restorer, reveals to him his God as still with

him, Pharaoh as unable to discover his retreat, as well as a thousand mercies which he cannot fail to count up and commemorate as years roll away; so his second child must speak of the divine goodness, and set forth his enjoyment of divine succour. Beautiful application of family names is this!—names which shall be lasting memorials of our family necessities, and of the faithfulness of God, our family helper.

It was scarcely a likely thing, that a mind such as that possessed by Moses, full of activity and enterprise, well educated, stored with knowledge, and capable of turning every form of observation to account, would remain entirely inactive and unproductive, during the long years of his life in the wilderness of Midian. Hence we are fully of opinion, that if he did not write the Book of Job during this era in his history, he at least collected all the materials of that wonderful work. It has been suggested, it is true, that the style of the book shows that none but the first and last chapters in it exhibit the same pure Hebrew as that in which Moses was accustomed to write. This may be readily admitted, without militating in any degree against the authorship. Those phrases of Chaldaic form and signification which prevail in the other portions of the work are suited to the places, persons, circumstances, and events which are described. Job was, doubtless, a real character—such an one as Moses may have seen, or of whose history he may have been informed. Every character set forth in the work is unique and complete; and the religious knowledge which the patriarch as well as his friends are represented as possessing, is perfectly consistent with the early times and the actual localities in which they are supposed to have dwelt. And in this work, what depth of thought! what sublimity of conception! what exalted views of the Infinite! how glorious the hopes of the future! A prince of distinguished rank, wealth, and charity, was Job; and such there were in

these lands approximating the Euphrates and Tigris—lands of mighty flocks; lands of mines of gold, iron, and brass (for of such Arabia could boast); princes who were educated in the schools of Chaldea and elsewhere, in astronomy, natural history, and other branches of science and art. He becomes doomed from plenty to suffer adversity: children, cattle, wealth, are swept away. Friends would comfort him. In their high argument with the distinguished Job, some of the most ennobling truths and exalted sentiments are uttered. He finds peace alone in God. Reposing in him, he can exercise in every description of trial the most exemplary patience; till, finally, he is delivered out of all his troubles, and his end is more prosperous and glorious than his beginning. There is a remarkable consistency, we conceive, between this inspired production and the retreat of Moses in the family of Jethro, the priest and prince of Midian.

Circumstances occur, near the end of the forty years of Moses in Midian, which naturally turn his attention towards Egypt. Pharaoh dies. The Israelites, under his successor, are more than ever oppressed. Their groans had been heard by their God. The nations and tribes around Goshen must have learnt of their sore affliction. Moses could not remain ignorant or unmoved. But he must not go to his brethren unsent; nor does it appear, at this time, that he was desirous of leaving his retirement. But the Lord had a mission for him, and he must fulfil it. It was about this period that he was keeping the flocks of Jethro near to Sinai, when he led them to the back part of the desert, to what afterwards was called "the mountain of God—even to Horeb:" when, behold! in an instant, a sight appeared to him which attracted his attention and fixed his gaze. There, before him, was "a bush burning, yet not consumed"—meet emblem of the condition of Israel in their fiery trials, yet sustained and even in-

creased in the midst of them; and not less fitting and beautiful type of both the Church and the individual Christian, encompassed with difficulties yet uninjured by suffering! To the believer, suffering is corrective, not punitive—sanctifying, not destructive. Alas! a fearful contrast to the case of the unbeliever, to whom it is punitive, not corrective—hardening, not sanctifying.

On this "burning bush" Moses now fixed all his attention, and went in order "to see the great sight." Yet, more wondrous still! as he made as though he would approach, a voice spake to him out of the "bush," saying, "Moses, Moses;" and he said, "Here am I." And the Lord said, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Then did God proclaim himself to his servant as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" informing him of the afflictions of Israel in Egypt, of their cruel taskmasters, and how he had come down to deliver them. At this moment the prophet has his mission. He must go to Pharaoh—he must go to Israel; the former he must induce to let the people go, the latter he must lead out of bondage into freedom—from the land of oppression into the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey. Modest and meek, Moses shrinks from the great work, and feels his utter incapacity for its accomplishment: "The people of Israel will not hear me." But God replies, "I am that I am"—the source of the being of all, and having control over all. Go tell them, "I AM hath sent thee." Nor does he conceal from his servant the difficulty he should encounter with king Pharaoh; yet, with a high hand and uplifted arm, all should be accomplished.

For Moses, however, a promise is not sufficient; he must have a sign. Concerning such the people would inquire. Truth is not revealed by miracle, but miracle is an important evidence of truth. Nor shall this be

wanting. Behold that rod in the hand of the shepherd-prophet! "Cast it on the ground," saith Jehovah. He obeys, and instantly "it became a serpent;" and Moses fled from it. Again the Lord commands, "put forth thine hand and take it by the tail; and he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." But by two witnesses every word must be established. Again, God commands, "Put thy hand into thy bosom;" he obeyed, and in an instant it was leprosed white as snow. "Put it back into thy bosom." Moses did so; and, behold! when he withdrew it, "it was whole as his other flesh." One would have thought that, immediately on his finding the Almighty was thus with him and sending him, he would have hastened his departure to his own kindred and people. But, no; he still objects, that he is not eloquent of tongue, and unfit for the work. Aaron his brother is promised to assist him: God is wroth with his unbelief. At length he consents, returns to Jethro to inform him of his visit to his own kindred, obtains Jethro's approval, and prepares with his wife and two sons to take the journey.

Come back, thou chosen of the Lord! come back; speed thy way to Israel, pity their oppression, speak to them words of hope and comfort. Visit the palace of Pharaoh, for thou knowest how to approach kings; bid him let the people go. Thy education is complete. In long solitude thou hast become patient and meek. Come back; come quickly! A work awaits thee to do, which shall fill all ages with wonder. No sword shall be drawn, no ransom shall be paid. God shall get thee the victory. Yet a whole nation shall march out of bondage as one man. A sight to meet all ages!—a prophet and a priest, with a single rod, shall lay low the pride of Egypt's monarch and her million people. Priests have not all been hurtful; prophets have not all been impostors. There never had been counterfeits, if there had not existed real coins. Come near and trem-

ble, ye unbelievers of the earth! The Lord makes bare his arm. Aaron amongst the priests, and Moses amongst the prophets. Pharaoh shall be humbled; Israel shall be free.

MOSES—THE LEADER, LAWGIVER, AND PROPHET.

Witness these travellers. The group is a small one, but never was there one more interesting in the desert, till the child Jesus fled to Egypt with Joseph and Mary. It consists of Moses, his wife, and two sons. They wend their way towards Israel in Egypt. There is, however, one thing for this servant of God to do before he joins himself to his people, and which he had neglected; an act of disobedience which, if persisted in, had for its punishment death: and that was, the circumcision of his sons; for of the uncircumcised person it was commanded, "He shall be cut off from his people, he hath broken my covenant." The sons of Moses, with himself, were now going to unite themselves to Israel; but it must not be till they have complied with God's appointment and received the token of his covenant. Moses appears by the way to have been seized with a dangerous sickness. The reason of this punishment the Lord reveals. There seems to have been some reluctance on the part of Zipporah to obedience to this law; but as the alternative was life or death, at last gratefully she complied, the life of Moses is spared, their sons are numbered with "the children," and in a bantering (not, we think, in a condemnatory) spirit, she exclaims, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me, because of the circumcision."

Meantime, God had informed Aaron that Moses, his brother, was now journeying by the way of the wilderness, and that he was to go forth and join him. Aaron departed; the brothers meet. They fall into each other's arms, in an embrace of unfeigned affection. But affec-

tion must not overwhelm; it must evoke energy. They have a work to do, and it must be done. They must move Pharaoh: they must gain the confidence of Israel. The former of these, Jehovah had intimated, would be a work of difficulty; the latter would require both patience and wisdom. Moses apprizes Aaron of "all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him." Brother's heart is knit to brother's heart for the accomplishment of the same grand enterprise. They draw near to Goshen together. Never, in this world's history, did two simple and solitary pilgrims, unarmed, unknown, without influence and without wealth, unbacked either by the voices of governments or peoples, attempt and determine to achieve a nobler work. Infidelity may laugh as it sees these brothers going to effect the emancipation of an entire people from the cruel bondage of the most powerful sovereign and nation of the age; but God is with them, and "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

Their first effort was with the people of Israel. When they entered Goshen they congregated all the elders of the tribes of Israel; where or how we are not informed. With thrilling anxiety we watch the issue of this first step; nor are we kept a moment in suspense. Aaron "spake to them all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." Blessed be the Lord, there is yet hope for Israel! Two things are ever fatal to the cause of the people—impiety and despair. The latter eats out as a deadly canker all their energies; the former renders their corruption complete, and demands of Heaven, vengeance, not succour. Israel's condition is full of the elements of success—they believe

and worship. Go, then, Moses and Aaron! the prayers of the people will go with you. Appear before Pharaoh; state your case in the language of manly patriotism; expect rebuffs—what cause was ever won yet, worth the winning, without faith, and toil, and patience? Be steadfast. This is your watchword—this is the watchword of Heaven to every patriot, in the achievement of every great and good work: "I am that I am, hath sent you."

We shall not attempt, in our limited space, to enter minutely into the conflict of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh, ere this mission was crowned with success. Too much of note of our prophet's work remains behind to be recorded. The demand placed before the king of Egypt was, "that he should allow the children of Israel to go three days' journey into the wilderness, to celebrate a festival, and to sacrifice to Jehovah." This demand was made by his servants, in the name of the Lord. The reply to it was one of the most unblushing atheism, as far as the God of Israel was concerned. Infidelity could not have asked for an answer more consummate. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Is there a God in Israel? The unbelieving may well mark the issue of this conflict, and tremble at the prospect awaiting themselves from their antagonism to Jehovah. The king must be convinced or compelled. "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do unto Pharaoh; for with a strong hand shall he let them go." And now we are summoned to witness a series of miracles, a demonstration of the power of Almighty God, in every respect unparalleled. Two things should be remembered in their consideration—the one, that Pharaoh must be convinced that what is done is the work of divine power; and the other, that the gods of Egypt

were no gods—but that the God of Israel was God over all, blessed for evermore.

Nothing could be more reasonable, than that Pharaoh should have permitted this people, in their own way, according to their own opinions, and at such a distance from the Egyptians as not to offend their prejudices, to worship their God. It is obviously opposed both to reason and right for one people to enslave another, or to interfere with the exercises of their religion. This appeal, therefore, being made in vain, another and more imposing form of address must be adopted. Jehovah has never resorted to miraculous manifestations, till truth, requiring to be vindicated and established, asks for an evidence necessarily beyond that of reason or moral suasion. It was so here. Aaron, therefore, having the rod of God in his hand, casts it on the ground before Pharaoh, and it becomes a serpent. The king calls in the magicians, and they do, or pretend to do, in like manner. It has been greatly disputed whether the work of these sorcerers of Egypt was a real miracle or not. We do not hesitate to give it as our opinion, that it was an act of legerdemain: whilst, as Dr. Kitto observes, there is in Egypt a serpent which, when stiffened, assumes the appearance of a rod in the hand; that this is easily done, by a process known to serpent-charmers, through a particular pressure on the neck, by which it becomes inflated, rigid, and motionless; and again, by the removal of which pressure, it assumes its serpent form and life. Moses and Aaron, however, do not call in question the power of the magicians on the occasion. It was a great point to get them to allow, that in certain wonderful works, divine interference ought to be acknowledged. Let them admit this, and when they are vanquished they must recognize as with Moses and Aaron the presence and mighty power of the God of Israel. Now, Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rods or serpents of the sorcerers—a plain proof of

his superiority; but Pharaoh hardened his heart, as the Lord had foretold.

Other evidence of divine power shall not be wanting. The glory of Egypt was the Nile. No waters were so sweet, no river so noble; and well might they rejoice in this remarkable provision of nature, rendering their country so productive. But they must be touched in the place of their pride. Pharaoh had gone down to the banks of the river, and Moses and Aaron are commanded to follow him. Again they prefer, in the name of the Lord, their request to let the people go. Again Pharaoh refuses. The rod of Aaron is uplifted—he strikes the water, and in a moment it is turned into blood. This appears to have affected the whole river; so that, to have water fit for use, they must have dug for it. The magicians are once more called in. The nobler miracle on their part would now have been to reverse the judgment. But no: such an amount of water as is desirable for their purpose they obtain, and by their "pharmacy" turn it into the colour of blood. No work of mighty difficulty, even in those early times, to the chemist! But for one man—and that in a moment—to change all the waters of Egypt, so that the fish died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of it, how manifestly was this a work supernatural! Still Pharaoh hardened his heart. The very reptiles which, in their idolatry, they esteemed holy, shall now become their plague. They had their frog-headed god and goddess. At the bidding of Moses and Aaron the waters shall send forth a flood of frogs. Their gods shall become their torments; and, forsaking their natural haunts, they are found in the king's chamber, and throughout all the houses of the people, even in their ovens and kneading troughs. This, too, the sorcerers imitate, by pretending to bring in what in reality it was difficult to keep out—attracting the frogs, by some substance or other well known to them, into a space

cleared for the purpose. Noisome, exceedingly, must have been this judgment. Pharaoh asks Moses that it should be removed; and at the very time which he appoints, it happens. Still, by an infatuation of the most fearful character, and strikingly showing us the depths of human depravity, he withstands the demand of the God of Israel for his people.

Stroke after stroke must fall upon the guilty sovereign and his subjects, for their cruelty and wrong-doing, till they cease their oppression, and let the oppressed go free. The very dust shall teem with destruction. Aaron smites "the dust of the land, and forthwth it became lice"—or, more properly, "gnats." Travellers in the East inform us of the power of these little insects, as they ordinarily exist, to embitter life. Think of them everywhere thick as dust. This the magicians admit they could not imitate, and exclaim, "Behold the finger of God!" or rather, of the gods. A miraculous work, they allow; but not by the God of Israel. Even this mistake shall be corrected. The beetle, in the monuments of Egypt, is frequently represented as receiving divine honours; being generally understood, Pliny remarks, as an emblem of the sun. Other insects were worshipped by them in like manner. The next plague shall be "swarms of flies:" and this only as affecting the Egyptians, Goshen being altogether exempt. They come, those "gods" of theirs, into the houses of the king and his servants, and all the land becomes "corrupted by reason of the flies." Now, Pharaoh would have let Israel worship in the land, not in the wilderness; but the concession is refused. Their cattle are smitten with murrain, whilst those in Goshen remain uninjured. Yet the cup of depravity is not full. Both man and beast must suffer from pestilence—boils breaking forth upon them, with blains; so that the very magicians, in their anguish, are driven from before Pharaoh. Thunder and hail shall be added, before which

every man and beast left in the field shall perish. Still, the power of God must more and more appear. All that has been saved from the hail and storm shall be eaten up. At the outstretching of the hands of Moses, an east wind blows; it brings with it a lowering, portentous cloud of locusts, covering land and coast in Egypt—"very grievous." They eat up every herb, and fruit, and green thing, desolating the country.

> "Onward they came—a dark, continuous cloud
> Of congregated myriads, numberless;
> The rushing of whose wings was as the sound
> Of some broad river, headlong in its course,
> Plunged from a mountain summit; or the roar
> Of a wild ocean in the autumnal storm,
> Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks.
> Onward they came—the winds impelled them on;
> Their work was done, the path of ruin past,
> Their graves were ready in the wilderness."

O hardened Pharaoh—plague-afflicted Egypt! Nations might long ago and for ever have learnt from you of the certain judgments of Jehovah upon oppression. How slow are rulers to understand! but they must be taught. The worst of all in Egypt was that heart-rending decree, by which the male children of Israel were doomed to death. Work in chains and under the lash is bad; but break the hearts of the enslaved, in addition, and that by the destruction of their children, their loved ones, and the fountain of their misery overflows. The last great plague must be a retribution and a restoration. Israel shall have liberty returned; Egypt shall know what it is to lose its offspring. Let the darkness gather—deep, dense, dark. Let it gather—it must be deeper, denser, darker still. Let the darkest hour of all—the hour of midnight—come, till the darkness may be felt throughout the land. The doors of the Israelites are sealed with blood—the sign of the covenant of life. No destruction can come nigh them.

Spread thy awful wings, thou Angel of Destruction, amid this midnight gloom, rendering it all-portentous! Stillness everywhere prevails; hour after hour, day after day, it continues. Three such days and nights are passed in Egypt, as this world had never witnessed; when, hark! the third midnight hour strikes, and in a moment, at the bidding of the Lord, the firstborn of man and beast, by an unseen arm, are slain. Roll off the outer darkness now—the inner is worse than the outer. Sorrow and sadness have smitten the whole nation. "There was a great cry in Egypt." This wail of lamentation from a people who had mocked and maddened others by their oppression, is the confession of an awful retribution. "Let the people go!" is wrung from king and country. Not one of all Israel had been smitten; and in remembrance of the destruction of Egypt's firstborn and their own safety, they go to keep the Passover.

So Pharaoh, the enemy of the God of Israel, was vanquished. Not that he was converted; this is a different matter, and one which is effected not by the punishment of sin, but by the constraining power of love. Still, either God's enemies must yield to him, or be crushed by his power. We follow not Israel in their march out of bondage to freedom—out of the slavery of Egypt into the service of Jehovah. One incident occurring at their departure requires explanation. In our translation, and in no other, Moses is represented as commanding the people, under divine direction, to "*borrow* every man from his neighbour, and every woman from her neighbour, jewels of silver and jewels of gold." The original word is, "ask" or "entreat." It is the same which is used in Psalm cxxii. 6: "Pray (or 'entreat'—not 'borrow') for the peace of Jerusalem." By the use of the word "borrow," the honesty of the Israelites is impeached; but in fact the Egyptians had long enjoyed the ill-requited labours of God's chosen

people, and now, afraid lest a heavier judgment might follow those which had already come upon them, they are glad to give them of their wealth, that they might escape. Israel is repaid in part her own—Egypt but gives in part what has long been Israel's due; her wrongs can never be wiped out, her children can never be restored.

Now ready for their journey, the Israelites leave Egypt on the fifteenth day of the month Abib, afterwards called Nisan, the same time of the year in which our Lord and Saviour finished the redemption of his people. "Harnessed" or equipped for the journey, they now proceed. "Such an emigration as this (says the author of 'Sacred Annals') the world never saw. On the lowest computation, the entire multitude must have been above two millions, and in all probability, the number exceeded three millions. Is the magnitude of this movement usually apprehended? Do we think of the emigration of the Israelites from Egypt as the emigration of a number of families twice as numerous as the population of the principality of Wales, or more than the whole population of the British Metropolis, with all their goods, utensils, property, and cattle? The collecting together so immense a multitude—the arranging the order of their march—the provision of requisite food for even a few days—must, under the circumstances, have been utterly impossible, unless a very special and overruling Providence had graciously interfered to obviate the difficulties of the case. To the most superficial observer, it must be evident that no man or number of men, having nothing but human resources, could have ventured to undertake this journey. Scarcely any wonder, wrought by divine power in Egypt, appears greater than this emigration of a nation, when fairly and fully considered."

Their three days in the wilderness have now expired. They are on the borders of the Red Sea. A pillar of

cloud has been their guide by day, and a pillar of fire by night. This was the abiding token of the presence of their God with them. They are now commanded to turn and encamp towards a part of the Red Sea, where they should be exposed to the Egyptians from behind, and have nothing but the waters in their front. They hesitate not, but obey. They must be taught to trust in God. The king, enraged that they did not return, determined to follow them. He gathered together a great army, with all the war-chariots of Egypt. He pursued hard after them; and as they were encamped by the sea-shore, lifting up their eyes, astonished and afraid, they beheld Pharaoh drawing near. They cry to their God, reflecting bitterly on Moses. "Fear ye not," was his reply; "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." The pillar which had moved before them now removed behind them—a cloud of light to the Israelites, but a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians. The command of the Lord to the Israelites is, that they "go forward." At the bidding of Jehovah, Moses lifts his rod, and strikes the waters, and a pathway is made through the sea, between two walls of water, firm as adamant. Forward they march, dryshod—forward, in perfect safety, having God for their protector. The Egyptians, thinking that the sea was now divided, and that all was safe, immediately follow. All Israel has reached the shores on the other side, and the hosts of Pharaoh and his chariots are between the divided waters. At the command of God, again Moses stretches out his hand and his rod over the sea; and in a moment the waters rush together, the Egyptians are overwhelmed in the waves, and "chariots and horsemen sink like lead in the mighty waters." Then sang Moses and the people a song unto the Lord. Above the roaring of the all-destructive wave, rose to heaven a hymn of heartfelt gratitude: Egypt is smitten, Israel is free. But, alas! human virtues must ripen into lasting fruit

in a kindlier clime than earth; in this world they may be lovely, but they are short-lived as blossoms.

Could it have been anticipated, that this delivery from the hands of Pharaoh, so manifestly of God, would ever have been forgotten? But it was; and not long afterwards, all Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. They shall have no occasion to mistrust; their God shall supply all their wants. The winds of the desert shall bring quails to their tent-doors, the rock of the desert shall yield them water to follow them all the way, and the windows of heaven shall be opened to supply them with manna where they can find no bread; and they shall eat angels' food. Their eyes shall not become dim, their strength shall not fail, their clothes shall not wear out, the arms of no enemy shall prevail against them, they shall have peace and plenty. So shall Israel prosper, having Moses for their prophet and Aaron for their priest. But let them forget the Lord, who had brought them out with a strong hand and an uplifted arm, and their bones shall bleach in the desert; yet their posterity shall possess the promised land.

The laws which were to regulate this chosen people, were given to them by Jehovah himself. When they had reached Sinai, a spot ever memorable in the personal history of their leader, Moses was summoned to meet God on the mount. Darkness now covered the whole scene. Israel was encamped around Sinai's base; the mountain burned with fire; lightnings flashed athwart the gloom; thunders roared; a voice then shook the mountain; the people trembled. Moses had been upon the mount for a considerable period. The people wearied and wondered. It was then their first tendency to idolatry appeared; and, alas! Aaron had fallen into the snare. They made together, Aaron and the people, a molten calf of gold, after the idolatry of Egypt. Coming down with the law to Israel, written

by the finger of God on two tables of stone, and discovering their idolatry, in dismay and despair, Moses let the tables fall, and they were shattered to pieces. The people repented them of their sin. In mercy God gave the law to Moses a second time; and to this day, for its life and holiness, the world possesses that transcript of the divine mind in the ten commandments—a code of morals pure, simple, concise, merciful, and complete; or, in the language of Scripture, "holy, just, and good." To Moses, too, in a long series of ordinances, the Almighty revealed that dispensation of grace which for so many centuries obtained in Judea, distinguishing Israel from all other people alike for knowledge, piety, and power. Most minute indeed were its requirements, but all healthful, both for body and soul. Thus, as the medium through whom Jehovah made known his mind to his people, Moses became the prophet of the law.

Never, in the history of the world, were a people more honoured or beloved. They were led by the Lord as a shepherd leads his flock; they were educated by him as a father instructs his offspring; they were protected by his arm as the hand of a strong man protects his own home; they were wooed by him with parental fondness; nothing calculated to make them love and trust him was withheld; and yet, with all, they were rebellious children. But in love did the Lord correct, as well as constrain. Fiery, flying serpents, coming into their camp, may sting them as with a death-wound; but a brazen serpent, raised by Moses on a pole, to be looked upon by them, shall save them. Fully and frequently are they taught that salvation is of the Lord; still, with a high hand and uplifted arm they sin; till, in judgment, every one of those who came forth from the bondage of Egypt, save only Caleb and Joshua, perish in the wilderness. Forty long years did they thus rebel. No wonder that even the meek Moses, as well as the priestly Aaron, should not continue wholly

perfect in leading such a people. Yet even their sin cannot be excused by the Holy One. Aaron dies in the desert. Moses shall have a view of the holy land, but must not enter it. He shall stand on Pisgah, on the wilderness side of the Jordan, and survey till he is satisfied with "the goodly land." On Pisgah he must die, and from the sight of the earthly he enters the heavenly Canaan. But where will his sainted ashes lie? Lest the idolatrous tendency of Israel should exhibit itself in revering, or even worshipping as sacred relics his bones, the angels must convey to a distance his body, and bury him in a spot unknown. In the embrace of God he dies, and the hosts of heaven afford him burial.

The name of Moses has been handed down to posterity, not only as an illustrious saint, but also as a distinguished writer. To him the authorship of the Pentateuch is ascribed. Where, or during what period of his life, these five books were written, we attempt not to determine. His simple, concise account of the creation has occasioned much controversy; but all the modern discoveries of science go to establish the perfect truthfulness of the history. His record of early remarkable occurrences—such as the flood, the confusion of tongues, and the destruction of the cities of the plain; his biographies of the most noted and excellent of the earliest generations of the human race; and his classification of the families and tribes of Israel, and of the laws and ordinances which for ages were to regulate "the chosen nation"—form together a most splendid contribution to the world's knowledge, affording lessons for all time, and giving unquestionable evidence of the divine inspiration which guided the mind and pen of him by whom they were composed.

The perfection of the character of Moses, taken as a whole, stands forth all but unrivalled amongst mortals. Simple in his habits, pure in his morals, untainted by earthly ambition, masterly in his management of men,

fired by an unquenchable patriotism, shrinking from no amount of fatigue to serve his countrymen, abused, hated, maligned, yet firm in the pursuit of freedom and mercy, with a heart entirely given to his God, still spent in outgoings of love to men; never, till our Saviour came, had the earth seen such a character. O that address of Moses to Israel, which he delivered with his dying lips! It stands alone. It is itself a pillar of fire and cloud. It is an ever-living flame of holy patriotism and piety. It combines every order of address and eloquence. It is an exhortation, a prophecy, a prayer, a rebuke, an encouragement, a command, a commission; in one word, it is the divine echo of the dying breath of "the patriot Moses" to the people Israel, which was to live and speak to all ages; more especially to that age when his own prediction should be fulfilled, "a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things." Him we must hear, if we are to live. By Moses we are led to him. He spake to Moses in the burning bush; he speaks to us amidst the golden candlesticks. He wrought miracles of wrath by Moses; he has wrought miracles of mercy for us. He was our prophet's stay all his journey through; he is equally willing to be ours. He met Moses on Sinai with the law; he meets us in Zion with the gospel. He welcomed the lawgiver from Pisgah. He redeemed the lawbreaker on Calvary. Moses entered heaven through Jesus; we can enter by no other way. Yes, we will hear him; "for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

SAMUEL,

THE PROPHET OF THE ALTAR.

CHRISTIANITY AND WOMAN—THE INFLUENCE OF PIOUS MOTHERS.

It has been objected that Christianity robs woman of the right of public teaching, and thus inflicts on the largest and most important part of the human family a grievous wrong. It is fully admitted that the influence of Christian institutions, and the purity of Christian precepts, have emancipated the female sex from the most degrading bondage, and have restored to them many of their heaven-chartered privileges. It is not questioned but that numbers of the abominable customs of heathenism and idolatry, such as legalizing polygamy and other immoralities, have disappeared wherever the gospel of Christ has been believed and practised, and that thereby woman has been elevated from being the slave to become the companion and friend of man; but still it is argued, that she has not had acceded to her all her rights, and that Christianity, instead of completing the work of her emancipation, has placed its imprimatur upon a portion of her bondage.

If this charge could be maintained, it would indeed be a most serious one. But let us see how far there exists even a shadow of reason for such an accusation. That paragraph of Scripture which is referred to in connection with the objection of which we now speak is in 1st Corinthians xiv. 34, 35, where women are commanded to "keep silence in the church." Many eminent commentators consider, that the practice here for-

bidden was that of putting questions in public, when the members of the church were met together for edification; and that full liberty was otherwise granted, both in prayer and praise, by the same apostle, in the 11th chapter and at the 5th verse of the same epistle. Whilst, further, it is held that the former privilege is abridged on the ground that, whatever was not understood, the wife had an opportunity of obtaining an explanation of her husband at home—the daughter, of her father: thus at once rescuing their public assemblies from confusion, and affording a becoming motive to the man to continue the superior in knowledge as well as the first in authority: "For the husband is the head of the woman, even as Christ is the head of the church."

But, admitting the commandment of Paul concerning woman to mean that she is not to speak in the church, what is the conclusion to which his precept leads? That Christianity is opposed to woman? No, for the influence of Christian institutions has already been conceded, and indeed cannot be denied, inasmuch as all history bears testimony to the elevation of the entire sex, as resulting from the spread of the gospel. The truth is, that it chooses for woman the most useful sphere for her instructions, as well as the one in all respects most suited to her domestic tendencies and modest nature. It takes from her more public work, to render her private influence all the more potent; it relinquishes the church for the fireside; it debars from community-teaching for character-making, and it gives to her the glorious privilege of nursing the noblest germs of childhood, so as to induce their unfolding into the noble man. Hence nothing in the history of womanhood has been so remarkable as the numberless instances in which mothers have been rendered useful in giving the first impulse to distinguished character, and in inspiring with the earliest ambition those who, in after years, have risen to eminence and honour in every

department of life. Hence also it is that the distinction of the females in Scripture, in general, consists of their kindly affections and untiring attention to distressed humanity, and in their being the mothers of the great and good. Still there are exceptions, even in regard to public prophesying. Such an one was Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the prophet of the altar.

THE BIRTH, EARLY DEVOTEDNESS, AND YOUTHFUL CALL OF SAMUEL.

It was now a festival occasion at Shiloh, where for more than three hundred years had stood the Tabernacle. Elkanah and Hannah, the parents of Samuel, were there; as also Peninnah, and her children by Elkanah. They had eaten and drank together. But there was one in that family circle whose heart had long been sad. Hannah had no children. Barenness, especially in the ages preceding the coming of Messiah, was esteemed a sore affliction. Taunt had followed taunt from Peninnah, entering like poisoned daggers into Hannah's heart. She wept, and would not be comforted. At last she carries her sorrow to the Lord. She lies low before the altar, engaged in long, deep, heartfelt devotion. She vows to the Most High, that if he will hear her cry, and take away her shame, from his earliest days her offspring shall be "given to the Lord." Her vow is heard, her prayer is answered; the intercession of Hannah obtains for her a son, and enriches Israel with a Samuel.

According to her promise, no sooner had Hannah "weaned" her child, than she brought him to Eli, the now aged High Priest presiding over the tabernacle at Shiloh. Never was there an earlier or more remarkable dedication to altar service. The parents of Samuel were of the tribe of Levi. It is still a question, however, whether he may really be considered as having been a priest; of his prophetical character we shall soon have

ample proof. When Hannah "lent her son unto the Lord for ever," then it was that she gave utterance to that beautiful prophetic song of praise, which has given her a name and a place amongst the inspired of the God of Israel. (1 Samuel ii. 1–10.) Concerning it the excellent Dr. Hales remarks, that it "excels in simplicity of composition, closeness of connection, and uniformity of sentiment; breathing the pious effusions of a devout mind deeply impressed with a conviction of God's mercies to herself in particular, and of his providential government of the world in general—in exalting the poor in spirit, or the humble-minded, and abasing the rich and arrogant, rewarding the righteous, and punishing the wicked. Besides predicting her own fruitfulness, she foretells not only the more immediate judgments of God on the Philistines during her son's administration, but his remoter judgments on the ends of the earth, in the true spirit of the prophecies of Jacob, Moses, and Balaam. Like them she describes the promised Saviour of the world as a king, before there was any king in Israel, and she first applied to him the remarkable epithet *Messiah* in Hebrew, *Christ* in Greek, and *Anointed* in English, which was adopted by all the succeeding prophets of the Old Testament, and by the apostles and prophets of the New."

At the time when the child Samuel ministered before the Lord, the condition of Israel, was one distressing to the hearts of the pious; painful in itself, and dishonouring to God. The people were both ignorant and ungodly. There was no "open vision;" the spirit of prophecy had been withheld; wickedness prevailed amongst the priesthood, and the service of Jehovah was disregarded throughout the nation. The presiding priest, Eli, appears to have been a good, weak man; devoted to God himself, but an over-indulgent father, corrected for his error by the wicked conduct of his sons. His history, and it is a trying one, is an inspired

record of great instructiveness. It is given both to the Church and to the world, to control parental affection and to rebuke parental weakness. There cannot be love, real and right-minded, in a parent overlooking evil in his child, in giving license to wrong-doing, or in merely lamenting what ought to be punished. All such unreasonable fondness is sin. It may in some cases, originate in ignorance; it often occurs through indolence and love of self-indulgence, or from a false regard to peace; it has its root, in almost every instance, in a defective estimate of the heinous nature of transgression; and it never fails of producing fruits of bitterness both in the experience of parents and children. Let fathers and mothers but prayerfully study the history of Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and the cause of much of the disorder so apparent in families, the unhappiness which exists, and the prodigalities which follow, may speedily be discovered and removed. We feel the subject to be one of vital moment, not only as it stands connected with the early history of Samuel, but also, and more especially, as it relates to this age of education. Teachers may supplement—they cannot and never were intended to, supplant, parental training. A spirit of submission to the authority of parents in children, is the first and most important step towards their future submission and consequent peace with God.

We have referred to Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli. To complete our purpose, we must enter a little into particulars. In becoming priests, their object was not the advancement of God's glory and the salvation of the souls of men—the proper motives for engaging in the ministry at the altar of the Most High. Their language however was, "Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread." Bread-artists, in every profession, are to be eschewed—men who enter not into them *con amore*, but for mere gain. By all such persons very little is ever

achieved. There can be no greater mistake, than that of compelling young people into a course in life for which they have no decided taste. The natural bias, in this respect, ought to be consulted; for where there is a relish for a certain description of labour, there the work will become pleasant and easy; attention will be secured, perseverance will follow, and success will of necessity be more likely of attainment. We have no faith in the commonly received opinion concerning genius—that a man is born to be great in his particular calling, apart altogether from careful preparation and labour. Perseverance is, at least, three-fourths of genius. To become famous in any avocation of life, long toil is needed, constant study, a daily increasing desire to excel, and a night and day perusal of the thoughts and models of other men, and how they may be improved. It cannot be too frequently enjoined upon the young, that there is no royal road to true distinction—no express train, no ballooning, up to that summit. It is gained, and gained alone, by determined, high-minded, and honourable industry.

But if all this be true concerning the secular callings of life, what shall we say of the spiritual offices of the Church of God? As well may we set the blind to teach the theory of colours, or the deaf the harmony of sweet sounds, as to think of putting an unregenerated, unrenewed man to do the work of the gospel ministry. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned." Away, we say, with all such worldliness and carnality from the house of God, if we are to expect the Church to become the regenerator of the world! Away, too, with everything calculated to be a bribe and a bonus to such ungodliness, that, with all the peerless beauty of her primitive loveliness, "pure and undefiled religion" may go forth and fulfil her mission amongst the nations!

Against nothing is the judgment of God more marked, than against priestly irreligion and impiety. The sons of Aaron, because they offered strange fire unto the Lord, were smitten to death; Hophni and Phinehas were slaughtered by the Philistines; and, in after years, Abiathar was thrust by Solomon out of the priest's office, because of his sin, to perish in extreme want. Happily, in our day all this is felt; and piety, whether in presbyter or prelate, is alike desiderated. May this conviction increase and abound; may everything obstructive of its realization be removed from the churches; may this last, best reformation, speedily come; and then may we expect, and the hope will not be vain, to witness pentecostal progress in the work of the world's conversion.

We must now return to Samuel. His call to the prophetical office had not yet been given to him; and he still waited in the service of God before Eli, at Shiloh. The statement that there was "no open vision in those days" in Israel, would appear to mean that there was no publicly recognized prophet who could be consulted in an emergency. In the Tabernacle, Eli had his apartments as presiding priest; near to his was that which the youthful Samuel occupied. It was about the year B. C. 1141, according to the Hebrew chronology, when the long-departed spirit of prophecy was restored. Eli was now aged and feeble, so that "his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see." It was night, and Samuel had fallen asleep. As he slept, a voice called to him—"Samuel! and he said, Here am I." He instantly arose, and went to Eli, thinking that it was he who summoned him. It was not so, however; but "Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him." This was repeated a second and also a third time. He was then informed by Eli that it was the Lord who called; and that, if the voice spake again, he must reply, "Speak,

Lord, for thy servant heareth." The voice did again awake Samuel, and he did as Eli had instructed him. Then came the first revelation connected with his prophetical office—a revelation of which it might well be said, that it would make "the ears of every one hearing it to tingle."

Witness this youthful messenger of the Lord of Hosts, his appearance comely, and his spirit meek and loving. Up to this time he had aided Eli in the service of God, and with respect and alacrity had obeyed him. Now he is to appear before the aged man, an accuser. Naturally, his soul must have shrunk from the task; but Jehovah had sent him, and the duty must be fulfilled. It is not a father who is chosen to condemn a father's delinquencies—it is not age and experience; but a child must rebuke a man—a youth must inform a parent how he has destroyed his own sons. The scene was one heart-rending to Eli. Oh, had he given his own children to the Lord, as Hannah had done Samuel, and had he trained them for him before the altar, instead of a tender voice now speaking to him terrible things in wrath, his own sons might have been pouring into his aged and withered heart words of kindness and consolation! Beautiful, nevertheless, amidst the blackness, is the submission of the aged parent and priest. "It is the Lord," is his language; "let him do what seemeth him good." Now was that sentence pronounced, which cut off the family of Eli from altar-service for ever. The fame of the restoration of the spirit of prophecy to Israel, with the speed of lightning, passed from tribe to tribe. It was the occasion both of hope and joy. Then, with one consenting voice, from Dan even to Beersheba, Samuel was acknowledged a prophet.

SAMUEL, A PROPHET AND A JUDGE.

It is in seasons of exigency that God calls and qualifies for his service men peculiarly suitable for the period. He always chooses his own instruments for the accomplishment of his work; but it is in remarkable circumstances when he makes most manifest his special providence. Do his people need the denunciations of his judgments to arouse them? some "son of thunder" shall be sent to reverberate his awful voice and demand attention to his oracles; are they oppressed and afflicted, and requiring consolation? some messenger of heavenly wisdom shall spread out before them imperishable hopes; or are they in darkness and doubt, not knowing whether to turn to the right hand or to the left? some holy man shall be taught by the Spirit of God, and shall appear in their midst, a light to disperse their gloom, re-establish their confidence, and restore their joy. It was at a time somewhat akin to the last of these conditions described, when Samuel was hailed by Israel as a prophet of the Lord. The period was one of oppression and irreligion. Prostrate and faithless, the people mourned in the dust, or wandered as sheep without a shepherd. But, behold! the spirit of prophecy is once more vouchsafed; there is one in their midst who can declare the divine will; he is hailed as a heavenly teacher. A better time appears to dawn; light rises above the horizon; and as the inhabitants of the north, when the dark months of winter are ended, hasten to greet the returning sun, so God's people, Israel, now rejoice over the first approach of a happier day. Before the voice of prophecy they awake out of the slumbers of despondency, shake off their long feeling of helplessness, and hail, as with one heart, the hope of freedom.

There is always a danger in such circumstances, lest men should rush from one extreme to another—from a

state of hopelessness into one of overweening confidence—from distrust, into self-satisfaction and self-dependence. As a father, God is always careful that this tendency shall not be permitted to lead to irreparable ruin, though it is often allowed to become the occasion of considerable suffering. Of this, the history of Israel, during the earlier days of the prophetical era of Samuel's life, affords a striking proof. No sooner was the expectation of the people established, through the manifestation of the Spirit of the Lord in their midst, than they determined to free themselves from Philistine subjugation. Immediately they assemble, and are as quickly opposed by their enemies. The conflicting armies join in deadly combat; but Israel is defeated with a loss of about four thousand men. This led to inquiry; and the opinion was, that they were vanquished because of the absence of the ark from them. The ark is removed from Shiloh, accompanied by Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, and brought into the camp. Its appearance is welcomed with a shout, "so that the earth rang again." This aroused the fears as well as the daring of the Philistines. The armies met. Again Israel was smitten, the ark of the Lord was taken by the enemy, and "there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen." Amongst the numbers slain were Hophni and Phinehas. The aged Eli had been watching by the wayside, to hear tidings from the camp; "for his heart trembled for the ark of the Lord." With breathless haste ran a man of Benjamin towards Shiloh, "with his clothes rent and earth upon his head." All Shiloh wept with sore grief. The evil tidings soon reached the ears of Eli. He was told of the death of his sons. This he could bear; but when he heard that the ark of the Lord was in the hands of the Philistines, he fell backward from his seat, brake his neck, "for he was an old man and heavy," and instantly died. Nor was this the only misfortune befalling Eli's family.

The wife of Phinehas, hearing of her husband's death, gave birth to a son; but she lived only long enough to name him "Ichabod—for the glory is departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband." Hence the origin of the proverb "Ichabod," as pronounced over departed greatness or splendour.

We follow no farther this history, interesting as it is—save to mention what befel the ark. Carried away by the Philistines, it was placed in the temple of Dagon, at Ashdod. There, before it the idol image fell down, and was broken to pieces. Wherever, too, it was carried, into whatever city, there plague seized upon the people, and multitudes died. Speedily they were glad, with presents and peace-offerings, to restore it to Israel. An awful judgment, even the destruction of "fifty thousand and threescore and ten men," came upon Bethshemesh, because, from impious curiosity, the inhabitants looked into the ark of the Lord. It was taken to Kirjath-jearim, where it remained for twenty years; throughout the whole of which period, Israel was humbled and their idolatry rebuked, and they "lamented after the Lord."

It was at this time that Samuel first stood forth as the prophet of Israel. With a voice the language of which was both condemnatory and conciliatory, he required of all the people that they should put away from them "their strange gods," that they should return to the Lord with all their hearts, that they should "prepare their hearts" and serve him, and then would they be delivered out of the hands of the Philistines. His command is heard and obeyed. They are gathered together at Mizpeh. There they fast, and sacrifice, and pray. Their assembling, however, had not been disregarded by their enemies. In large companies they march against Israel to battle. But God is with his people. A fearful storm of lightning and thunder

bursts upon the army of the Philistines. They are immediately discomfited and put to flight. The men of Israel pursue. The Philistines are routed with a fearful slaughter; insomuch that they gladly make peace, deliver back all the cities which they had taken from Israel, and are kept in subjection, as by the mighty hand of God, during "all the days" of the rule and oversight of Samuel. It was after this victory that the prophet, with all the people, took a stone and placed it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it "Ebenezer; saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Thus we have the origin of this truly pious motto, which the servants of the Most High have rejoiced in all ages to use, in commemoration of seasons of the divine goodness and mercy.

Secure from external molestation, and enjoying the restoration of the ordinances of true religion, the land rested in peace, and the people began to prosper. Now the government commenced of Samuel, as judge over all Israel. Many conjectures have been hazarded, as to the real character of the office of the supreme judge. This will best appear by referring to the different forms of government which obtained, at different periods, from Abraham to the close of Israel's nationality. From the first, they must be viewed as having been subject to a theocracy—that is, the people were God's subjects, and he was their king and lawgiver. This continued under a variety of administrations—such as the patriarchal, the judicial, monarchical, and sacerdotal. The first of these existed from Abraham to the time of the deliverance by Moses. The Hebrew nation, like all others, began with little communities or families. The father or patriarch, in these primitive circumstances, was both king and priest over his own household, and those of his children and grandchildren, and their domestics—having a power by divine right to bless his offspring, to offer sacrifices, and even to decree punishment by

death. This office descended to the firstborn of the family, if not otherwise regulated (as, for example, in the instance of Jacob) by some special election of God. Even during the period of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, this form of civil and judicial authority remained, the prince or head of each tribe being the ruler of his tribe—till, under the bondage to which they were subjected by Pharaoh, Egyptian prefects and taskmasters were set over them to oppress, compel and punish them. This era has very properly been designated, the infancy of governments. The patriarchal period amongst the descendants of Abraham, was clearly theocratic, inasmuch as their God constantly revealed himself to these rulers or heads of families, or to some chosen servant, to instruct them, whenever special directions were required.

The judicial administration began with Moses and closed with Samuel. It constituted a kind of republic, the judge being president over the nation. Indeed, in the case of Moses, he was called "king in Jeshurun." For the first year after the Jews came out of Egypt, he sustained the whole weight of the government himself, administering justice to the people; but by the advice of Jethro, his father-in-law, he deputed some part of his power, and introduced inferior judicatories, dividing the people into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and appointing competent persons, who were presented to him by the people, to preside over these different courts or districts. Their business was to sit daily, as circumstances required, to execute the law, to keep order, and to minister justice: and when on any occasion a cause could not be agreed upon, it was referred to Moses, as supreme judge—whilst he, again, was to ask counsel of the Lord, and to pronounce a final sentence. The patriarchal was also somewhat united with this judicial government. The heads, or princes, of the twelve tribes were still rulers, each one in his own tribe,

assisted by the heads of the different subordinate families; for not merely was Israel divided into the twelve tribes, but each tribe also into its distinct families, each having its patriarch. These were from time to time convened by the chief patriarch, assisted him in cases of difficulty in connection with the regulation of their own tribe, decided regarding the part their families were to take in war, and in any other matters of importance which might occur. Nor were the people altogether excluded from power in the Hebrew State. On solemn occasions they were convened, either by themselves or through their representatives, by the sounding of the silver trumpets; were admitted into counsel, listened to debates both on civil and ecclesiastical matters, and announced their consent to such measures as they approved, by holding up their hands, and with loud acclamations.

Even these arrangements, however apparently complete in themselves, were not found sufficient. The difficulty manifested itself in investing all supreme responsibility and power in one person, accumulating upon him an amount of labour in connection with a whole nation which could not possibly be overtaken, as well as an extent of responsibility beyond what one man could bear. This occasioned the creation of the college or senate of the seventy elders, who were to be coadjutors with the supreme judge, invested with almost equal power, and whose decisions were law. These elders are supposed to have been selected, generally, from amongst the judges of the inferior courts. The superiority of the supreme judge, throughout the existence of this form of government, consisted in his being divinely appointed to the office, in his being a prophet, and in his thus possessing inspiration by which, in all emergencies, to announce the divine will.

How monarchical government was first instituted in Israel, we shall shortly have occasion to explain. It

continued from the inauguration of Saul, to the time of the captivity—a period of about five hundred years. Upon the return of the Jews from Babylon, the government became sacerdotal; the High Priest having the supreme authority, though the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, possessed the responsible power. This remained for about the space of four hundred and twenty years; when again the regal government was introduced by Aristobulus, one of the successors of the Maccabees, and which existed in its entirety and independence not longer than forty-six years. Then came Pompey the Great, the Roman conqueror, sweeping before him every vestige of free institutions throughout the East, subjugating all to Roman sway, and rendering Palestine, with other nations, a mere province of the Roman Empire.

We are now in a condition to appreciate the position of our prophet, as he became invested with authority as judge over the nation. His sentence in all causes was final and beyond appeal; he was, in short, a kind of inspired dictator and governor—his power absolute. A good man, in such a position, throwing his own heaven-begotten excellence and integrity into every part of the nation's government, could not fail of being a universal benefactor; but it is fearful to reflect, to what an extent a self-seeking, ambitious man, might have become a curse. The administration of Samuel, however, was one founded on the most impartial and just principles. His own residence was at Ramah, generally believed to have been the Arimathea mentioned in the New Testament. Yearly he appears to have gone to different parts, to judge amongst the people. We read of his doing so at Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh. Some think that the origin of the English mode of administering justice, by judges going periodically on circuit throughout the land, is to be traced to Samuel's practice. It may be so; still we are inclined to the opinion, that the

prophet went on these journeys rather to overlook the administration of justice in general, than by becoming the judge of all causes requiring decision in the various districts of the country.

Thus, throughout the years of his vigour and activity, did the prophet employ himself for the good of God's chosen people, amongst whom he ruled. It does not appear, nevertheless, that the condition of the people was one of satisfaction, or spiritual and social health. Their tendencies were still to idolatry, and their customs partook largely of a painful imitation of the heathen nations with which they were surrounded. They seem to have had little faith in their God. They had forgotten the past. As years rolled on, hurrying them to some distance from the period of immediate divine interference for their safety and prosperity, they regarded not the doings of the Lord, and heard without being affected of the power of his might as revealed on behalf of themselves and their fathers. Even disregard to the prophetical office and character, as these existed in Samuel, began to show itself. Their yearnings after a change had soon an opportunity of being exhibited. In an evil hour, his own strength having failed him, Samuel was induced to appoint his two sons, Joel and Abiah, to be judges with him. Alas! the sons were very unlike their sire. They "walked not in his ways: they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."

Grace is not hereditary, but is wholly the sovereign gift of God. Many of the best of parents have lived to witness the ungodliness of their offspring. Perhaps public men are peculiarly liable to this sore trial. Engaged so much apart from their families, and in official matters, their children left to themselves, or with domestics and teachers; unless the mother is wise, orderly and authoritative, as well as pious, necessarily the education of their early years is defective. Or it may be,

as public characters having a name "to keep unspotted from the world," their discipline is remarkable for strictness and rigidity. Allowing little for the elasticity of childhood and the buoyancy of youth, they keep their families apart altogether from any knowledge of the world or of its ways; and when their children arrive at that period in life when they may act apart from parental restraint, headlong they rush into every manner of excess—not, it may be, at first, with a determination to be wicked, but rather to ascertain what the world is; till, caught in the meshes of the Evil One, they have no power to escape. Be this as it may, nothing is more obvious in the annals of families, than that, whilst parents have the promise that if they "train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it" (a promise often strikingly verified in age in those who, during the season of youth, have forgotten their childhood training), yet that God alone can command the blessing. A solemn verity, summoning all parents, who truly love their offspring, to join with every lesson of instruction constant, believing, importunate prayer. O for more of that education in the world which ever links earth with heaven!

SAMUEL'S RESIGNATION, RETIREMENT, AND DEATH.

We have now to draw attention to the origin of the Hebrew monarchy. It is at least something to the credit of the people of Israel at this time, that the change which they sought, was one which they wished to effect, in accordance with the theocracy under which they were placed. Seeing that the sons of Samuel were unworthy of being his successors, the elders of Israel gathered together and went to him at Ramah. They hesitate not to inform him of their disapproval of the course pursued by Joel and Abiah, and, enamoured

of the ways of other nations, they ask for a king to rule over them. This request could not be pleasant to the aged prophet. He consulted his God. He is commanded to yield to their entreaty, at the same time intimating to them the displeasure of the Most High, who was in reality their king, and whose authority and right would necessarily be obscured by the presence of a subordinate visible monarch. They are informed by the prophet of the disapproval of the Lord: still they cling to their determination. Samuel then fully and faithfully depicts before their eyes all the outlay of land and taxes, of soldiers and slaves, of servants and children, which they were about to entail upon themselves. "Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." Their prayer is granted; and most fully in after years did they prove—as, what nation has not proved?—the expense attendant upon royalty.

Of the flower of the youth of Israel, none was at this time so fair, so comely, or so attractive in person, as Saul, the son of Kish. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, and his father was "a mighty man of power." He was "from his shoulders and upwards higher than any of the people." A simple circumstance first introduced him to Samuel. His father's asses had wandered and were lost. Saul, with a servant, is sent to seek for them. They could not be found; and being near to the place where the prophet now dwelt, Saul determined to consult him. They took their offering, part of a shekel of silver, and hastened to the seer. Samuel had been apprized the day before, that on the morrow "a man out of the land of Benjamin" would come to him, whom he should accept as king. To the astonishment of Saul, the prophet informs him of God's choice of him. He is anointed with oil by the prophet, re-

ceives the kiss of submission, and is thus recognized—"Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?" He receives the spirit of prophecy, and is acknowledged king "on the hill of God," or by the school of the sons of the prophets. For a time he conceals his appointment from his own relatives. At last an assembly of the tribes is summoned by Samuel at Mizpeh, that their sovereign might be chosen. The lot falls on Saul, and all the people shout "God save the king." He began his reign about the year B. C. 1096.

The farewell address of the aged prophet, delivered on this occasion to the people, is one of matchless integrity, unflinching faithfulness, and heart-thrilling tenderness. He inquires of all the tribes whether one amongst them could charge him, in any way, with oppression or injury. The response of the assembly was worthy of the integrity of the man: "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us; neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hands." He then blames them for their idolatry, which they confess; and for their wish to be governed as the nations around, to which they still adhere. He now points to Saul, the anointed of God, and their own choice, bidding them "behold their king." With a voice of solemn, searching, holy earnestness for God, he entreats them not to forget his service. The season in which they were assembled was that of wheat harvest, a time when thunder or rain was unknown. But to enforce his words with divine authority, he prayed: the thunder roared, and the rain fell, "and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel." Now, whilst they shrank in alarm before his presence, did the aged prophet pour into their ears the truth of life and salvation, that it might live when he was dead, and that the people might remember and turn to the God of their strength. "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider

how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

Hoary with age, bent down with arduous service, Samuel now retires to Ramah. He was not a man to be idle. The fatigues of the past, the ingratitude of Israel, cause him not to shrink from the work of the Lord. "Do good" is the motto of true piety; "do good, hoping for nothing"—"do good for its own sake," is the divine element of perfect success. It was most assuredly the sanctified master-passion, even in old age, of our prophet. Hence, after his retirement from the office of judge, he betook himself to labour in "the schools of the prophets." Many believe that he was the founder of these remarkable Jewish institutions. Most assuredly we hear nothing of them before his time. They consisted of dwellings apart, built on different mountains, where the most hopeful of the youths of the tribe of Levi, as well as of the Nazarenes, or those who had taken vows of devotedness to God from other tribes, were instructed in the doctrines of religion and trained to acts of piety, the better to prepare them to receive the prophetical spirit, to instruct the people in their duties, to reprove them for their sins, to inform them of the coming of Messiah, and to foretell future events. Over these presided some venerable prophet, who enjoyed the spirit of inspiration. Not that God did not, from time to time, raise up some remarkable person, to whom he revealed himself in a signal manner, and sent to perform some great mission or accomplish some great reformation. Yes; beyond the regular priesthood, and apart from the schools of the prophets, as occasion demanded, "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The necessity which existed for the ordinary prophetical office, apart from the offering of sacrifices and making intercession for the people by the priests, will

at once become manifest by a simple reference to these early times. All around Israel the heathen had their oracles, which they consulted; false oracles, it is true, but still revered and followed. Now, had God's people had no living voice to which they might listen, and from which to obtain direction, there is not a doubt, from the well known tendencies of human curiosity, they would have been ready to apostatize to heathen oracles, or set up something in imitation of them for themselves. But they were left without excuse, by the establishment in various parts of the country of these religious seminaries. The localities where they were instituted were the high places—those scenes of the frequent resort of the people to sacrifice, after the ark of the Lord had been removed from Shiloh, to the time of the building of the Temple. Thence were these holy men to go forth and bless the offerings, and to instruct the people. The scholars in these schools were called "sons of the prophets," because they were pupils of as well as assistants to the prophets; in the latter sense much as the evangelists were to the apostles. They published, too, amongst the people, the instructions of the prophets, when their masters were otherwise engaged. In the kingdom of Israel the principal of these institutions were at Ramah and Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal. In Judah also they existed; more especially at Jerusalem. One of these was the school where Gamaliel taught, at whose feet Paul sat. So highly, indeed, was the character of those estimated who presided over or were students in these theological colleges, that none were permitted to be buried within the walls of the holy city but kings of the family of David and the prophets.

It does not fully appear, that there was any initiatory rite employed, on the occasion of an introduction into these seminaries. Some suppose that then it was when they were anointed with the holy oil of consecration. Their garments were—the prophetical mantle, made of

lambs' skins and hanging down to the ground, cloth woven with hair next their bodies, and bound round the middle with a leathern girdle. Their fare was simple—most commonly pottage made of herbs, barley cakes, dried fruit, and honey. They were much addicted to the cultivation of music, often writing their own hymns and singing them—which also was sometimes called prophesying. Their studies referred especially to theology, although some learned men affirm that to these were added philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. Thus the Greek name "Sophos," was originally applied to the astronomer; and is clearly derived from the Hebrew word "Zoph," which signifies a prophet. Heavenly knowledge, however, of the purest and most exalted description, was their chief pursuit, and with a fidelity worthy of their high vocation did they proclaim it to the people; as well as stand and testify for God, even at the risk of martyrdom, in the presence of kings.

It will be readily inferred, from what we have said, that prophesying did not always mean fortelling future events, but also preaching or teaching. The prophets in the Jewish Church, not the priests, were the types of Christian ministers under the New Testament dispensation. All believers are priests unto God, offering every prayer in connection with the perfect paschal sacrifice, Jesus Christ, the Saviour. Ministers are his ambassadors, beseeching men, in his stead, to be reconciled unto God. So were prophets God's messengers, proclaiming as need required his special revelations, and teaching at all times the importance of walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. The manner in which actual revelations were given to them was varied; sometimes it was in dreams and visions, or by inspiration. That of dreams was when they were overtaken with a deep sleep, and the outward senses were completely locked up; then God made known to them his will, either by images and signs

placed vividly before their minds, or by conveying to their spirits, as if he spake to them, his will, which upon their awakening they fully apprehended. These dreams they divided into two kinds, the one monitory and the other prophetical—the former being instructive to Israel, at special junctures, as to what they were to do as well as what to avoid; and the other, when either what appeared in sleep or when what was said was an obvious divine revelation. Vision was different. It occurred in one of two ways—first, by some real, visible appearance, as that of the burning bush to Moses; or, secondly, by powerful impressions on the imagination when the prophet was fully awake, though thrown into a trance; these impressions absorbing and altogether possessing the soul, so that all intended to be conveyed by them was fixed upon the memory and rendered easy of record or announcement. The last form, without referring to that of Urim and Thummim, of which nothing is now known, was that by immediate inspiration, which took place when the person was fully awake and every faculty active, apart from either the senses or the imagination; communications made directly to the understanding, in which the Holy Spirit made use of man as a reasoning, sympathetic, loving medium, but giving to those who were so acted upon such things to reveal as were altogether beyond the possibility of human reason to reach or human wisdom to discover. Thus, by the letter of the law possessed by "the schools of the prophets"—a careful exposition of revelation, as it was afforded by the presiding prophet—and direct divine communications—a body of well instructed, holy, and singularly self-denying men were enjoyed by Israel for many generations—rebuking their departure from God, condemning their impiety, stimulating their zeal, animating their expectations, and, as they believed and acted, or rejected and remained indifferent to their warnings, announced God's abiding mercy or approaching judgment.

Such were the institutions generally considered to have been founded by the prophet Samuel, after he ceased from judging Israel. The remaining part of his life becomes mixed up with that of Saul. The question, however, has been suggested, whether he was not more useful in the latter days of his life than he had been in the former. We believe that he was. As the supreme ruler amongst the people, he had done much to ameliorate their temporal circumstances, as well as to cultivate amongst them a lively sense of obligation to Jehovah. But speedily the whole character of his administration undergoes a complete change; and, in relation to the government, all was as if he had scarcely ever lived. Now a lasting memorial of wisdom, forethought, and pious service to his country, closes his manly career. To be honoured,—if not to found, at least to forward "the schools of the prophets," is most assuredly Samuel's noblest monument. From these, age after age, flowed forth living waters all over the land, fertilizing its far-spreading fields, invigorating the people's piety, and insuring a goodly harvest of glory to the Lord. Far and wide the pure light burst from them, like signal fires kindled on mountain summits, announcing on all occasions the enemy's approach, summoning the soldiers of truth and of God to arms, and gaining for them many a victory. Nor to this day are their reflex influences quite extinguished. The churches of God have still their prophet-schools. Samuel still lives in the love of a well-taught ministry. More than ever are these institutions required; and if the church is to prosper—if it is to become strong, to go up in the name of the Lord and "possess the land"—if it is to do the work of Jehovah in the world's conversion—more than ever must Christians be careful that their "schools of the prophets" are "hills of God;" giving to the nations those who shall "not be ashamed of the gospel,"

and who shall know nothing amongst men but "Christ and him crucified."

The closing scenes of Samuel's life occurred at Ramah. He who had himself been a ruler, is chosen of God to be a king-maker. Saul was anointed by him; and when he was rejected, he selects David as his successor. The seer remained supreme judge, as well as councillor, even when he was not supreme ruler in Israel. Many a time did he instruct Saul; and to him was given the solemn task, on account of his disobedience in not destroying all connected with the Amalekites, of rejecting him in the name of the Lord from being king. The death of the prophet was now at hand. Before Saul was king, he had ruled sixteen, some think twenty, years; whilst the period in which he acted as supreme judge appears to have been about forty years. In his ninety-seventh or ninety-eighth year did the prophet die. Such a life —so lengthened, so holy, so upright, and so active, is a remarkable living chapter for a nation to read—a wonderful out-spoken lesson for a people to hear; and well had it been for Israel, had they listened to Samuel. Still, his perseverance amidst neglect, and his untiring labour to do good amidst contumely, could not fail of being finally influential. Nor was it. No man was ever more lamented at his death than was this prophet. We hear no more against his sons. All is forgotten in a nation's sorrow. Men never learn rightly to value their mercies, till they are taken from them.

The tidings of Samuel's death soon spread. From all parts of the land, the people gathered together and lamented him; lamented him, Josephus says, for many days. It does not appear that the Israelites had, at this period in their history, public cemeteries. Each family had its own separate place of burial. Abraham bought for himself and family his parcel of ground. Samuel is the first of whom we read, that he was buried "in his own house" at Ramah—by which is evidently meant

in his own garden, or near his own house. Joab afterwards is spoken of as being buried in the same way. This practice was very likely common amongst the better families of the Jews. The Thebans, we read, were commanded to build a sepulchre, before they began their house. We merely mention the tradition, that the body of Samuel was removed to Constantinople in the time of the Emperor Arcadius.

Come then, Israel, from all quarters; gather around the remains of your prophet. Weep and howl, for a great man and a good one is taken from your midst. Gently touch his sainted ashes; they are dear to God. Lay them in their last resting-place; lay them as seed into the soil; water them with showers of tears. A harvest is needed of such holy men to revive and regenerate a dying world; and such there will be; but the time is not yet. Honour, everlasting honour, to the country which has sleeping in its bosom, as in the lap of a loving mother, prophets and priests, apostles and martyrs, confessors and saints. Even to God such a land is precious.

In attempting to estimate the wisdom, the devotedness, the immortal worth, of so eminent a servant of God as Samuel, we feel that we cannot do better than adopt the language of the learned and pious Dr. Delany: "No wonder," says he, "that so righteous a ruler and so just a judge should be uncommonly and universally lamented; especially when the wisdom and equity of his government, compared with Saul's tyranny and extravagance, made his memory more dear, and his loss more regretted. He was now attended by all Israel to his grave, amidst a nation's sorrow and a nation's tears. How singular was the character and felicity of Samuel! devoted to God from the womb, and worthy to be so; early dedicated to the Divinity, and hallowed by his influence; descended from prophets, himself a greater. The service of his God made the early business of his

life, which was not interrupted by anything but the service of his country. Scarcely ever man, in his senses, in the vigour of life, and in the age of ambition and avarice, forced by no danger, urged by no guilt, and pressed by no infirmity of mind or body, ever yet voluntarily and of his own choice resigned the supreme power, secluded his sons from the succession, and elected two strangers to it, in rotation, neither of whom he had ever seen before. Yet Samuel did all this; and therefore, when the Scriptures assure me he did it in obedience to the divine command, I cannot help believing them: the narration carries its own irresistible evidence along with it. Happy Samuel! rare felicity, with undiminished dignity—or, to speak more justly, with added honour—from the concurrent and universal testimony of his country to his equity and incorruption! Oh, would princes so use their power, or so resign it! Illustrious in the splendour of a throne, and yet more so in the shade of a cell, so far from envying his successor, he pitied and he prayed for him. He had raised him by the divine favour, but could not so restore him. It were hard to determine which was the happier, his life or death. He lived to the noblest purposes—the glory of God, and the good of his country; and he died full of years and honours, universally lamented. Such was Samuel. Such always were, and such always will be, in a good measure, all those whose beginnings are laid in true religion, whose duty is their delight, and their God their glory."

DAVID,

THE ROYAL PROPHET.

THE TRUTHFULNESS OF SCRIPTURE AND THE IMPARTIAL DEALINGS OF GOD.

The Bible is a book of realities. Its very parables are truths figuratively expressed. It reveals the perfections of God as they are devoutly to be estimated by us, and his character as we require to know it to be saved. It regards human life just as it is. It records the memoirs of distinguished men, and the histories of the nations of which it treats, precisely as they occurred. Biographies written by uninspired men, give a colour to the characters and conduct of those whose lives they narrate, in accordance with the personal or party views of their authors. The sole aim of Scripture is to exhibit individuals, families, and nations as before God—sin as it defaces the divine image in man, and truth as it sanctifies and restores to righteousness and peace its possessors. There is no mere picture-drawing in the Bible. With profane writers, their characters are all either very excellent or very wicked—friends are saints, and enemies are demons: the biographies of Scripture exhibit the good points of bad men, and the imperfections of good men. To read the mere historical parts of the divine volume, without prejudice and with an intelligent appreciation, is to be impressed throughout with the realness of all which the authors narrate.

It has been intimated, that many of the transactions in the lives of such individuals as David and Solomon, would have been better suppressed than recorded. It

has been thought, that they have acted as an apology, if they have not afforded a plea, for others running into a like excess of ungodliness and criminality. We can understand the state of mind which originates such a wish; but we frankly confess, that had only the good and excellent portions of the lives of these kings of Israel been delineated, and indeed had the same taken place in reference to all the other Scripture characters, we should have desiderated a most invaluable body of evidence to the truthfulness of that Spirit which presided over the composition of the whole volume. All would have assumed the air of fiction; and human nature, as we find it, could not have been recognized. Now, however, we have it as it really is, in the every-day struggle of life—sinning, and striving against sin; hating evil, and yet haunted by it; cast down by the destroyer, but seizing in the fall the cross; the heart the arena of the greatest conflict in the universe—a conflict of the worst of passions against the noblest of aspirations, till, by grace and truth, Satan is bruised under our feet, and God takes possession of the soul.

Nor is this all. Had the sinfulness of David, for example, been kept out of sight, so also must have been his repentance. Never in the history of the world have there been such unfoldings of deep, heart-rending sorrow, on account of departure from God, as in the case of the royal son of Jesse. Into what thick clay does he describe himself as sinking! into what depths does he feel himself reduced! how the pains of hell gat hold upon him! how he found trouble and sorrow! And so completely does he feel himself lost, that nought but the arm of God can place his feet upon a rock, or establish his goings; whilst the real instruction emanating from every part of the Psalmist's life consists in this—that we find none of his sins going unpunished; lashed by the scorpion-whip of his own awakened conscience; smitten by the frown of God brought down,

like the shadow of death, on his path; suffering till he sees the evil of sin, and cries for mercy and grace to help him in his misery. The fire never goes out around the life of David, which burns for the purpose of separating in him the dross from the gold. Thus his history becomes a beacon-light, blazing night and day on every point of danger in life's ocean, warning the inexperienced and unwary throughout all ages against the quicksands of licentiousness, the rocks of ambition, and the miry clay of intrigue, and guiding all into the only haven of security in our world, the love and service of God.

Nor ought we to overlook the extent of opportunity afforded by wealth and sovereignty, both to tempt and to gratify the wicked passions of human nature. Viewed in the light of eternity, in many respects poverty is much to be preferred to riches; the former has its deprivations, but self-denial is most serviceable in restraining from iniquity—whilst unrestricted plenty, in our depraved nature, often allures to ruinous results. The word of God, however, plainly reveals to us the impartiality of the divine dealings. Neither kings nor peoples are permitted to go unpunished for their evil ways, but are either reduced to repentance or reserved for judgment. The occasion of the anointing of David, by Samuel, affords an instructive instance of personal punishment, as shown in the rejection of Saul; and the annihilation of the Amalekites, as a distinct people, manifests the like stern Providence as visiting the sins of nations. A glance at both of these cases is required of us, in entering upon a consideration of the life and character of David, the royal prophet.

THE HISTORY OF THE AMALEKITES; THE CHOICE OF DAVID, AND HIS COMBAT WITH GOLIATH.

The first intimation which we have in Scripture of the people bearing the name of Amalek, the son of Eliphaz, the grandson of Esau, and by some supposed to be the father of this nation, is at the time when, without provocation, they came up against Israel, destroying those who lagged behind through weakness and fatigue, and finally seeking to conquer and cut to pieces the whole of God's "chosen nation." They were a powerful race, inhabiting Arabia Petræa, between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea—or, in Scripture language, between Havilah and Shur. They appear to have been a wandering people, without many fixed places of residence; for we read of only one city which belonged to them, and which is mentioned in 1 Samuel xv. 5. They dwelt in the caves of the mountains, or carried about their tents.

No sooner had the Israelites passed the Red Sea, than they began their inhuman onslaught upon them. This continued for some time, till Joshua, by the command of Moses, was sent to repel their attacks. But in their own strength, the men of Israel were utterly incompetent to such a task. They knew nothing of the arts of war; the Amalekites had been long devoted to deeds of outrage and plunder. Moses, therefore, taking with him Aaron and Hur, went up to the mountain, to intercede for Israel with God. From morning to evening he prayed; and so completely was the victory to his people from Jehovah, that only when Moses' hands were held up did they conquer; and when they fell, the Amalekites overcame. Aided by his brother, Aaron, and chosen servant, Hur—"the hands of Moses were steady till the going down of the sun." The battle was then ended, the Amalekites were routed—a noble illustration to all generations, not only of the

value of prayer, but also of co-operation amongst those that are pious; the people with the minister, and the pastor with the people, pleading with the Eternal for a blessing on all that is attempted in his name. Thus "the Amalekites became a nation devoted to destruction by Almighty God, for one of the most notorious instances of cruelty, inhumanity, and impiety, that was ever heard of; namely, the invading and destroying, as far as in them lay, by treachery and surprise, of an innocent people, uninjured and unprovoked. This was a sin so great, that perhaps it cannot be surpassed in the history of the world; and therefore it is no wonder if so flagrant an act of villany and impiety, plainly indicating the last degree of previous depravity, produced the dreadful decree against them (Deut. xxv. 19): 'Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.'"

The victory which Joshua had thus gained, through the intercession of Moses, was commanded to be remembered; Jehovah saying to his servant, "Write this for a memorial in a book." Under the judges, we find the Amalekites continuing their hatred of the Israelites, and uniting with the Midianites and Moabites to oppress them; but Ehud delivers them from Eglon, and Gideon smites both Midian and Amalek. Their cup was now full; their iniquity called for vengeance: the judgments of God are made known. This old enemy of his people is again in the field, determined to destroy them. Saul was king. The prophet Samuel reveals to him the mind of the Most High, as he goes forth to the battle—"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: I remember what Amalek did to Israel, how he laid in wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all." Neither man, nor woman, nor child, nor cattle, nor riches, were to be saved—a fearful destruction! but one from which sinful, tyrannical nations are to learn the end of those

who pursue iniquity, and love robbery and oppression rather than liberty and righteousness; a destruction in which the innocent suffer with the guilty, infants with those of age (better, indeed, for the infants, than to grow up like their wicked fathers!); and one both fitted and intended to strike terror and dismay into the hearts of the Lord's enemies.

What God commands, painful or difficult as may be the accomplishment, believing that he does all things well, it is the duty of his servants implicitly to obey. Saul was to be the divine hand in this matter, not his own master. He goes forth, and the Lord gives him a complete victory; but, seized with covetousness, he destroys not all belonging to the Amalekites. He spares the murderous Agag, either to lead him in triumph at his feet, or, what is more likely, expecting for his release a ransom. Under the pretence, too, of keeping their cattle and movables as a sacrifice, he saves them. Sin burns as a fire, and as a fire it cannot be concealed. The prophet hears of Saul's disobedience, and charges him with his transgression. He denies the accusation, blames the army, and yet justifies the deed by saying, "The people took of the spoil the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord thy God in Gilgal." Ah, wretched pretence! how often has the cloak of religion been used to conceal both the heart and the deed of daring iniquity! "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he also hath rejected thee from being king." No sooner was he informed of this divine resolve, than he saw his error, and pleaded with the prophet that it might be recalled. But it had gone forth; and amidst a most painful struggle, Samuel declared that it must remain, and be fulfilled.

The venerable prophet now proceeds to anoint Saul's successor to the throne. He is sent to Bethlehem. Alarmed at his arrival, the people inquire as to his intent; when he allays their fears, and informs them that he had come in peace, and to sacrifice. Amongst those who dwelt in this city, afterwards so distinguished in the history of redemption as the birthplace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was Jesse, a direct descendant of Judah, the fourth son of Jacob. Concerning no tribe of Israel has the spirit of prophecy recorded such remarkable expectations. The patriarch Jacob, in giving to his children his dying blessing, thus spake of Judah: "Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." In a like anticipatory strain, Balaam also spoke to Balak of this tribe: "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." The hour of its elevation had now arrived, and the first belonging to it, who was to sway the sceptre of Israel, was to be anointed.

The sons of Jesse, according to their ages, were to appear before Samuel. To allay the suspicion of Saul and the consternation of the Bethlehemites, the sacrifice is offered, and Jesse and his sons appear at the feast. They were eight in number; but David, the youngest of them, was in the field keeping sheep. We know not whether the father was quite aware of what was now the object of the prophet; but it is obvious from the sacred narrative, that both he and his sons considered the matter one of grave concern. Eliab, the eldest,

was the first to come before Samuel. Struck with the dignity and gracefulness of his person, the prophet hastily concluded that he must be the chosen of the Most High. He was soon undeceived, and informed that "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." In succession, the six other sons of Jesse pass in review before the king-maker, but none of them receives the divine approbation. He is filled with embarrassment, and in a state of considerable anxiety asks the father whether he has no other son? He is informed that there is one more, with the flocks. Samuel commands that he should at once be fetched. Jesse obeys; and immediately when David arrives, who was the youngest, and comes into the prophet's presence, he obtains the divine approval, and is anointed.

The law of primogeniture, as it is carried out amongst men, is one which receives no sanction from God. Abel, the servant of the Most High, was Adam's second son—Cain was his eldest; Jacob, Isaac's younger son, is chosen, and Esau is left; and David, the youngest of all the eight sons of Jesse, is "the man after God's own heart." This phrase, we believe, is one much misunderstood. It seems to us not to refer so much to moral, as to official distinction. Spiritually, David was very far from being what God approves; but for the throne of his kingdom, the purposes of his providence, and the establishment of his service and honour in the midst of Israel, he was a man wonderfully suitable to the emergency. Some, we know, unhesitatingly apply the language to the religious aspect of David's character; we consider it as having reference rather to his official relation, as the Lord's vicegerent and instrument. The selection of David, a younger son, was in itself an act expressive of the divine approbation of him for the throne and mission to which he was called, and for which he proved himself so singularly adapted. It is a pain-

ful thing to see how frequently in our country, the eldest in the family is ennobled and enriched, whilst the remaining children, though equally deserving, and in no respect inferior, are rendered dependents for life, and treated as subordinates. Such things cannot be justified, where all are brethren.

It has been a question of dispute, as to the age of David when he was chosen to succeed Saul. Josephus mentions that he was ten years of age; whilst Calmet and others make him fifteen. Some think that he was much older. The statement of Professor Jahn appears to us to come nearest the truth, by making him from eighteen to twenty years old at the time when Samuel anointed him. This is all the more likely when we remember that some time afterwards he is described to Saul, by one of his attendants, as "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person; and the Lord is with him." And yet, when the king saw him on the occasion of his offering himself to meet Goliath, he objected to him because he was but "a youth." To which David replied—"Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he rose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear." This is thought to have occurred between the time of his being anointed and first appearance amongst the armies of Israel; for, with admirable simplicity, after Samuel's visit to Bethlehem, he returned to his former employment. Nor does he seem to have been greatly honoured amongst his brethren; either, it may be, from his being the youngest, or, what is more likely, from envy.

The ways of God, in choosing the seasons in which to make known his will, both as to persons and par-

ticular missions, are often very remarkable and striking. It was so now in David's history. From the time of Saul's rejection from the throne, as announced to him by Samuel, he became a changed man. Dark and disturbing passions agitate his bosom, and his life is a burden to him. He became the prey of an evil spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord was now departed from him, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." An awful affliction, and coming from such a quarter! How God must hate sin; and how disgusting in his sight, those who indulge in it! The state of the king's mind becomes manifest, even to his attendants. He must be diverted from his afflicting thoughts; and what more powerful to do so than music? The attempt of too many to drown their cares in a flowing cup, is the surest way to increase them. The excitement of the period once gone, nervous irritation succeeds; and this, added to the previous mental disturbance, is certain to render life intolerable. But "music hath charms to soothe the savage breast." Saul adopts the advice of his courtiers. David, whose talent on the harp had distinguished him, is recommended: he is sent for by the king; he appears in his presence; and when he saw him, he loved him and appointed him his armour-bearer; so when the evil spirit was upon him, he played upon his harp, and what Pythagoras did for himself, so David did for Saul—"quieted the perturbations of his mind." Thus he who is to-day a shepherd, by a single turn in the providence of Jehovah, to-morrow becomes a courtier.

How long he continued thus to wait on Saul, the sacred narrative does not mention. Very shortly after his arrival in the palace, a war broke out with the Philistines; and this seems so fully to have absorbed his attention, that his minstrel was no longer required. At any rate, he returned once more to his father's flock; but it is, very soon to become more famous. The Philistines, from the time of the Israelites taking possession

of the promised land, were their inveterate enemies. In fact, they were the inhabitants of a considerable portion of Palestine, even in the days of Abraham. They appear originally to have come either from Caphtor, the Delta of Egypt—or, as some think, from Cashmire, immediately east of the Indus—and to have expelled the Arim, or ancient Canaanites, and possessed themselves of their lands from Hezzerim to Azzah, generally believed to be "Gaza," mentioned in the history of Samson. They do not appear to be devoted to destruction by name, as the Canaanites were; but Joshua gave their territory to the Hebrews, and commanded that they should be driven forth. They remained unsubdued, nevertheless, till the reign of David. During the government of Eli, and the first part of that of Samuel, they greatly disturbed and oppressed the Israelites. Again, in the reign of Saul, they come up and attack them.

To meet this invasion the king assembles his forces, and draws them up in battle array on an eminence in the valley of Elah, in the territory of Judah. The Philistines select a hill opposite to them, in Ephesdammim, between Shochoh and Azekah. The brothers of David—Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah—were with Saul in the army. Here they remain forty days, neither party choosing to commence the contest. During this period, there came forth from the ranks of the Philistines, Goliath of Gath, a man of gigantic stature, "whose height was six cubits and a span; whose helmet was of brass, and whose coat of mail weighed five thousand shekels of brass; with greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass upon his shoulders, and the staff of whose spear was as a weaver's beam, weighing six hundred shekels of iron;" who was the champion of the Philistines, and who defied the armies of Israel, saying, "Give me a man that he may fight with me." This he repeated morning and evening daily. But Saul,

and all in the army of Israel, were "dismayed and sorely afraid of him."

It was at this juncture when Jesse called David from keeping the flocks, and sent him to the army with an ephah of parched corn and ten loaves for his sons, and also with a supply of ten cheeses for "the captain of their thousand." He left home in the morning; and in the afternoon, as he drew near, he heard the shouting of the hosts, as if about to enter into battle. He presses forward, when, just as he arrives, Goliath once more steps forth from the ranks and repeats his challenge to Israel, and all the men of Israel flee from him. David's spirit is aroused within him. He feels the dishonour which has fallen upon his country. He asks, "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel?" for, says he, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" He is informed that he would be liberally rewarded by the king, receive the king's daughter in marriage, and his father's house become as the royal house, "made free in Israel"—free, that is, from taxes, impositions, and services incumbent on all the other families of the Hebrews. Eliab, David's eldest brother, hears his inquiries, and, dreading the courageous spirit of the youth, is displeased with him, and wishes his return. But "is there not a cause?" is his succinct reply. The bravery of the young Bethlehemite is reported to the king, and he is sent for into the royal presence. Saul would have dissuaded him because of his youth; but he is met by the feats of his daring, already recorded, with the lion and the bear. His manly confidence at length assures the royal heart; he receives his approbation, and is commanded to "go, and the Lord be with him." Nor did David trust in his own strength. With beautiful simplicity he says—"The Lord that delivered me out

of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

The trumpets sound—a deadly silence follows. The armies are drawn up in battle array. An embassy is sent forward to the ranks of the Philistines; they announce that the challenge of their champion is accepted. There is joy in the camp of the enemy; for who dare meet their Goliath and hope to live? There is much misgiving in the ranks of Israel, for a stripling is to be sent to meet a giant. "But the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." Fearful must have been the forebodings of the three brothers of David during the interval—but they are silent: perhaps their jealousy of their youngest brother made them care the less about a successful issue to him out of his trouble. Saul arms David with his own armour; but he finds it cumbersome, not being accustomed to be so girded. He lays it aside; and, with his shepherd's staff in one hand, his shepherd's bag by his side, and his sling in the other hand, he goes to the brook in the valley, and chooses five smooth stones, putting them into his scrip. He looks up to his God; he trusts alone in him. He is now ready to go forth against the enemy of Israel. He declares his desire to advance; the announcement is made for the combat to proceed.

Never was there a moment of more lively concern portrayed in the history of the armies of Israel. The shepherd-youth steps forth amidst many a fear and many a frown. But, undaunted and full of hope, he whose appearance was "ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to," marches forward to meet his country's foe. Unarmed, an infant when compared with Goliath, he goes to defy his enemy. When the army of the Philistines see the expected champion of Israel, a loud shout of disdain bursts from every lip. Goliath himself haughtily remarks, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with

staves? And he cursed David by his gods, and said, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field." But David replied: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and all this assembly shall know, that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

The two combatants now advance towards each other. With enormous strides Goliath approaches; the son of Jesse makes haste to meet him. The armies on both sides are breathless; the anxiety is intense. As they draw near, David takes a stone from his scrip, and places it in his sling. His hand is lifted up, the stone flies; with unerring certainty it enters into the forehead of Goliath, who falls on his face to the earth; David rushes forward and stands upon his foe. A shout bursts from the ranks of the Israelites. The Philistines flee, when they see that their champion is dead; they are driven before Israel, and are routed with frightful slaughter. Meantime, David draws forth the sword of Goliath from its scabbard, and severs his head from his body. The contest is complete; for the Lord guides his arm and gives him victory. "And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent." The Israelites return from pursuing their enemies, and rejoice in their triumph. Inquiry is now made by Saul in reference to David, for he does not appear to have remembered him; and he is informed that he is the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite. Thus was the future king of Israel, by a remarkable providence, introduced publicly and most auspiciously to the soldiers of the different tribes. Yet never was combatant more successful, and victor more shamefully rewarded.

How true it is, in every department of human action, that the demand creates the supply; the circumstances of the hour the hero of the age! Throughout the whole transaction which we have endeavoured to describe, how remarkably does this appear! The whole army of Israel is defied; but amongst the hills and vales of Judah a shepherd-stripling is being educated to meet and vanquish the giant Philistine. He must first kill the lion and beard the bear; and he who has a spirit within him which shall not shrink before the strength, nor fear the ferocity, of these forest kings, is destined to manifest a like valorous fortitude in a more fortuitous field. Nor in his case is the opportunity wanting. The anointed of Samuel has soon the flower of Israel as his witnesses; and the forces of the Philistines, who were to be afterwards vanquished by him, were to become acquainted with his daring and his destiny. Most naturally, Saul is represented as being ignorant of David, when Abner brought him into his presence with the head of Goliath, he having been with him only as a minstrel, and at such times when his spirit was distressed and distracted. At court he appears to have been little, if at all, known; for Jonathan's regard to him began the moment he saw him, and that was after his victory. From this day, the youngest son of Jesse is the most illustrious youth in Israel!

THE LOVE OF JONATHAN, AND THE WRATH OF SAUL.

One of the most beautiful relics of Paradise, left to us amidst the ruins of the fall, is that of friendship. It is a rare bestowment, but where it exists in sincerity it is a rich one. It consists of a deep, heartfelt sympathy and attachment between those whose natures are kindred and congenial, though both in their mental and moral structure there may be considerable diversity of

development. It is a regard which sometimes commences at first sight; sometimes after frequent meetings, giving an opportunity of witnessing those qualities on account of which both are drawn together; which matures by degrees, and increases by careful culture, which hardens into healthfulness and vigour under circumstances of trial and sorrow, and which, wherever it is well founded, exists in an atmosphere of love which "suffereth long and is kind, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things;" which rejoices in making sacrifices and in affording services, in communicating pleasure and alleviating pain; which malignity cannot destroy, and absence cannot affect. Nor, as Robert Hall remarks, are "the pleasures resulting from this mutual attachment of kindred spirits confined to the moments of personal intercourse; they diffuse their odours, though more faintly, through the seasons of absence, refreshing and exhilarating the mind by the remembrance of the past and the anticipation of the future. It is a treasure possessed when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible." What a noble possession—and one which can never be too highly estimated in a changing, suffering world like this—is an unchanging, ever-sympathizing friendship!

And such was the friendship of David and Jonathan. Formed when they first met, it never varied but to grow stronger, till the death of Jonathan; nor was it ever forgotten by him who was the survivor. Hence, long afterwards, the son of Jonathan, a cripple, is made to sit at David's table, because of the love he bore to his father. Returning from the field of slaughter, the forces furnished by the tribes retire to their different localities. Through whatever cities the king and the army pass, shouts of welcome hail their approach. The news of the triumph had spread far and wide. Nor

were the women silent. This song met them at every stage—"Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands:" unwelcome words to Saul, stirring up the wickedness that was within him. David is retained at court; and whenever the "evil spirit" returned upon the king, he is summoned to soothe him by the strains of his minstrelsy. Most murderously had Saul determined to take his life. On two different occasions, when he played before him, did he cast a javelin at him to destroy him, which he happily escaped; nor did he keep his word by giving him his eldest daughter, as he had promised to him who should prove himself the champion of Israel against the champion of the Philistines. But "all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them."

About this time Saul discovered that Michal, his second daughter, loved David. He does not oppose her attachment, but turns it into a snare to seek his destruction. He asks not for his daughter a dowry, but demands that he who should be his son-in-law should first bring an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, his enemies. David went forth and slew two hundred Philistines. He then gives him Michal, his daughter, to be his wife; yet more than ever he fears him and desires his death. From this period a course of the most heartless persecution is conducted against him by Saul, ever recorded. Unwilling to believe that this could originate in jealousy, but thinking that it was the result of disease, he for a season continued at court, exposed and maltreated. His own daughter discovers her father's savage design by putting an image in the place of her husband, whom Saul intended to slay in his bed. Jonathan himself, for David's sake, tests the real state of his father's heart concerning him, and for a time appears to turn him from his purpose. Once more war is renewed with the Philistines, and the son of Jesse leads forth the army of Israel to victory, destroys their enemies,

and restores peace. More than ever Saul is enraged against him. David consults Samuel at Ramah. Even thither he sends messengers to take him; but seeing him among the prophets, their spirits were influenced, and they likewise prophesied. This was repeated thrice. Saul himself also hastened thither. He too was in like manner overcome. Hence originated the proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

David can find no rest from his inveterate enemy, even in this hallowed circle. Truly, if "love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave." He returns secretly to Jonathan, that he may carefully ascertain whether it is Saul's disease or dislike. The friends renew their vows of attachment, and ask direction of the Lord; and Jonathan painfully discovers how inimical the heart of his father is towards his brother and friend. He now flees to Ahimelech, the high priest at Nob. He receives of him Goliath's sword, and is fed with the shewbread, taken from off the golden table. Not believing himself secure within Saul's territories, he retires and seeks shelter of Achish, king of Gath. Here, however, he becomes known, and must have been slain, had he not feigned himself insane, and thus obtained his dismission without injury. From thence he betakes himself to the cave of Adullam, where he is joined by his parents and relatives, driven doubtless from their own home by Saul's suspicion, and by about four hundred more, a motley group of the distressed and disaffected. Thence he goes to Mizpeh, of Moab, appearing before the king of that country, and asking shelter for himself, his parents, relatives and friends, till they saw what might happen—a request which was honourably granted.

From place to place he is pursued and attacked. The prophet Gad now advises him to return to Judah, where Abiathar, the High Priest, joins him, bringing with him all the priestly ornaments and robes. On account of

the kindness which he had received at Nob of Ahimelech, which Doeg the Edomite had seen and which he reported to Saul, Doeg is commanded to attack the city and destroy the priesthood; and of those who wore the linen ephod, fourscore and five persons are put to death. Some have blamed David for his return to Judah, conceiving that he intended to create a rebellion against his father-in-law; but nothing appears more obvious than that he had no such design. It is what he could easily have done, and that with success. Instead of this, however, he turns the arms of his followers against the Philistines, who took advantage of this state of things in the land, and at the threshing-floors of Keilah he attacks and disperses them. But even this service is ill accounted of by Saul. He is obliged to flee for his life from Keilah. He goes into the desert of Maon. During his stay there, he protects both Nabal and his flocks from the Arab tribes, receives in return nothing but ingratitude, and desists from destroying him and his family only through the intercession of Abigail, whom afterwards, at the death of Nabal, he marries; for during his flight, Saul had given Michal, his wife, to another. He is followed hither also by the king, but was saved from any attack on account of the Philistines again invading the country. He retires to Engedi, and afterwards remains on the hill of Hachilah. At both of these places, the king's life was in his hands; but on both occasions he generously spares him, so that even he, for the instant, is overcome by his kindness. Achish, king of Gath, now gives Ziklag to David for an habitation, which afterwards was burnt by the Amalekites, taking captive the women, and carrying away much spoil. Grieved at their cruelty, and at the condition to which they had reduced by this act his followers, he pursued, and overtook them feasting, and destroyed them all. Achish wished him to go up with him against Saul; but to this the princes of the Philistines objected,

and by their king he was dismissed in peace. How painful have been his wanderings!—but they must soon come to an end.

Meantime, the war proceeds with the Philistines. The Israelites are in their camp, waiting an opportunity of attacking them. A partial reconciliation has been effected by the noble conduct of David at Hachilah, to which we have referred; when, accompanied by one warrior alone, he entered the camp of Saul, found him in a dead sleep and unprotected, and again retired, taking with him his spear and cruse of water at his head. Abishai, his companion, would have put the king to death, but for David. Next morning, he appears upon a neighbouring height, and in a strain of biting irony asks Abner whether he was not the greatest of all in Israel, and why he permitted his master to remain unprotected; shows the spear and cruse, and informs him how he had obtained them. The king hears his voice, knows it, learns how much he is indebted to his magnanimity; and for the last time they meet and part. Saul, predicting his greatness and offering his blessing, returns to his place, each apparently forgiving and forgiven. Still David had no confidence in his professions, and feared that one day he should perish by his hands.

Samuel, the prophet, is now dead; and Saul, disheartened by the frequent inroads of the Philistines, and the care which the war incurred, determines to consult an enchantress, the witch of Endor, whom he formerly threatened to put to death. He disguises himself, and goes to her. She inquires whom he desired she should bring up from the dead. He said, Samuel. She commences her enchantments, and starts back as if afraid at what she had herself accomplished. She is asked what she saw. She says that she sees gods ascending from the earth. Again she looks, and again is asked. She beholds one like an old man coming up. Saul

stoops with his face to the ground, and bows before him. He "perceives" that it is the prophet. Samuel is then represented as reiterating God's rejection of him, the judgments that were to come on the morrow, his own death, and the death of his sons. Overwhelmed, he fell to the ground and lay there, and, for a season, would not be comforted. At length he arose and ate, and at night retired as he had come.

The whole of this transaction is a mysterious one. It stands alone in Scripture. We are inclined to the belief that there are two things which fully account for all ghostly apparitions, or at least the majority of them—the one, an optical illusion; and the other, the power of conscience. How far both of these, aroused and awakened before the account given by the enchantress, may have operated in Saul's case, we undertake not to decide. We think God was in the matter, especially in the announcement of what was about to occur next day. As to the power of the woman to recall Samuel from the dead, we believe she had none, but was a mere instrument in the Lord's hand, for the accomplishment of his purpose.

On the morrow, the armies of the Israelites and the Philistines meet. The struggle is a sore one, but it is soon ended. The Israelites fled, and fell before their enemies in great numbers. The Mount of Gilboa is strewn with the slain; amongst them are the three sons of Saul—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua. Saul himself is hard pressed, and fears that he must be taken by the enemy. To escape the disgrace, he asks his armour-bearer to draw his sword and destroy him. He refuses; when that moment he takes his own sword, falls upon it, and dies. So likewise did his armour-bearer. Now all is over. Their cities are taken. Next day, Saul's head is severed from his body by the Philistines, and sent in triumph throughout their land. David is, meantime, at Ziklag, where he is informed by a man

who escaped from the camp of the Israelites, that both Saul and his sons were slain. He rent his clothes. Sorrow took hold of him. The Amalekite who brought the tidings, expecting a large reward for carrying the good news, and especially, professing as he did that he had slain the king, is put to death as a regicide; and in one of the most beautiful and affecting elegies ever penned, did David lament their end. With Jonathan, indeed, the poem begins, and with him closes; yet throughout, the praises of both are celebrated in strains worthy of their distinction. He begins, "How are the mighty fallen!" He continues his lamentation,—"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." And, calling down a curse on the very mountain where they die, he summons the daughters of Israel to a participation in his sorrow; whilst his heart, giving vent to its affection, thus sighs out its grief: "O Jonathan! I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan! Very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

Come forth, thou son of Jesse, to thy kingdom! Long hast thou wandered, beloved of Israel, hated of Saul. Long hast thou known adversity—thou shalt now have a throne. Israel shall prosper, guided by the man after God's own heart. Thy hand has been mighty, thy heart has been generous; let them abide in their excellence. We have seen thee hunted by a heartless tyrant, who desired thy death; beware thyself, when thou art placed in power. We would now study thee as a prophet and king. Come forth! Israel awaits thy coming, the land requires thy victorious leadership, the Philistines dwell in their strongholds. Thou art the chosen of Jehovah, the anointed of Samuel, the people long to bid thee welcome. Leave for ever the refuge of the mountain,

the hiding-place of the cave; come forth to a crown! Wear it, remembering thou hast received it of the Lord; wield the sceptre, knowing it is for the nation's good; be the patriot, the prophet, and the saint! Leave not on the broken fragments of discontent the scattered letters of thy name; leave it boldly, blithesomely written on the well-proportioned superstructure of a nation's religion, peace, prosperity, and gratitude—the noblest monument which a sovereign can obtain, and the highest honour which a mortal can deserve.

DAVID, A ROYAL PROPHET, A VICTORIOUS KING, AND A DEVOUT WORSHIPPER.

It is generally considered, that not fewer than between seventy and eighty of the hymns constituting the Book of Psalms, came from the inspired pen of David. Many of them were obviously written in circumstances of difficulty and distress, in times of deep penitence, and in seasons of grateful joy. Some of them possess internal evidences which show that they were composed during the period of his persecution by Saul; others, on the occasion of the ark being removed to Jerusalem; others, when judgments were averted or inflicted—when the enemies of Israel were defeated; during days of penitence or times of praise; amidst family trials, such as the rebellion of Absalom; and individual mercies, such as finding peace with God in his sanctuary and in his service; in receiving light for darkness, joy for sorrow.

The personal feelings and experience of David everywhere pervade his divine compositions; nor is it possible to read them without being struck with the unfoldings of human nature which they exhibit, the heights and depths of depravity which they reveal, the amazing goodness of the Lord which they set forth and celebrate, and the glory and majesty of the Most High which they

acknowledge. So much is this the case, that men of all classes in society, and of all climes on the face of the earth, have found their own feelings depicted and their own religious convictions minutely described, as if David had possessed not one but many minds. The pure taste, too, which pervades the whole, is as refreshing as it is remarkable; presenting the Psalmist as the scholar and the poet, the divine and devout worshipper —the Lord as seen by him as worthy of all honour, and he alone; and he who pays it as enriched by the service. Nor is the Church of God, and its one great King and Head, ever lost sight of. Beautifully as well as truly has it been said by Bishop Horsley, in his work on the Psalms, that "of those which relate to the public history of the natural Israel, there are few in which the mystical Israel is not adumbrated; and of those which allude to the life of David, there is none in which the Son of David is not the principal and immediate subject. David's complaints against his enemies are Messiah's complaints—first of the unbelieving Jews, then of the heathen persecutors, and then of the apostate faction of later ages. David's afflictions are Messiah's sufferings; David's penitential supplications are Messiah's, under the burden of the imputed guilt of man; David's songs of triumph and thanksgiving are Messiah's songs of triumph and thanksgiving for his victory over sin, death, and hell: in a word, there is not a page in the Book of Psalms in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he reads with a view of finding him."

In the course of our memoir, we now come to the kingship of the son of Jesse. David hastens to Hebron, by divine direction, immediately on hearing of the death of Saul and Jonathan. There he is proclaimed King of Judah. Aided by Abner, the commander-in-chief of the army, Ishbosheth, Saul's son, is made king at Mahanaim, beyond Jordan, over the other tribes. This division of the kingdom occasioned for several years perpetual war.

But success everywhere crowned the arms of David; till at last, Ishbosheth having quarrelled with Abner, to whom he owed his crown, the latter came to Hebron to David to offer his allegiance and services, but was treacherously slain by Joab at the gate of the city, from fear of his influence. Through his untimely end, the union of the tribes was for a time retarded. Afterwards, two officers of the tribe of Benjamin, (that tribe to which Saul belonged,) whose names were Rechab and Baanah, cut off the head of Ishbosheth whilst he was reposing in his own house at midday, and brought it to Hebron, to David, expecting a liberal reward. He however knew better, being fully conscious that if he favoured men thus cruelly seeking to do him a service, he was only nurturing a class of evil-doers, who for a larger recompense would be willing to do the same for others against him. Most wisely therefore did he proceed to put an end to such iniquity, thus condemning the murderers—"As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, when one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead! thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him at Ziklag, who thought that I would have given a reward for his tidings; how much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house, upon his own bed? Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and now take you away from the earth?" The two regicides were instantly seized and put to death, their hands and feet were cut off, and, as a public mark of infamy and detestation, their mangled bodies were exposed to public gaze at Hebron.

David was now waited upon by the heads of all the tribes, expressing their unanimous desire that he of whom the Lord had said—"Thou shalt rule my people Israel, and thou shalt be captain over Israel," should become their king. He at once consents, having already been king over his own tribe for seven years

and six months. As nearly as we can ascertain, he must have been in his thirty-eighth year, when he was made king over all Israel. Two things are mentioned in connection with the anointing of David, which we dare not overlook. The one was, that the sovereignty of Israel was not absolute, but was associated with certain restrictions. Hence, when the elders of the tribes were assembled at Hebron, it is said, "David made a covenant with them." What this league really was, we know not; but in the lives both of Solomon and Rehoboam we find several circumstances limiting the king's power, in accordance with what was due to the heads of the tribes. The other was, the recognition of the government of Israel as a theocracy. The elders acknowledge David only under God; and accordingly, we read that "David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel."

No sooner was Israel thus established under the sway and sceptre of "the royal prophet," than two events were felt by him to be necessary, to render his reign auspicious and distinguished. The one was the reduction of the Philistines to a state of unconditional submission; and the other was the taking of Jerusalem, the removal of the ark thither, and the establishment of his government in that "city of the Lord." To these objects he addressed his undivided attention. The ancient enemies of Israel, the Philistines, no sooner heard of David's accession to the throne of all the tribes, than they declared war against him, and assembled their forces in the valley of Rephaim. Here twice they sustained a complete defeat; and from this time down to the reign of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, a period of about two hundred and forty-six years, they were subject to the kings of Judah. Afterwards they seriously distressed "the people of God," insomuch that we find severe judgments denounced against them by Isaiah, Jere-

miah, and several other prophets. They appear in later years to have become tributary by turns to Assyria, to Egypt, and to Babylon; afterwards to Persia, under Alexander the Great; and were finally placed under the sway of Jonathan, by Tryphon, regent of the kingdom of Syria.

Jerusalem, or (as it was now called) Jebus, was held at this time by the Jebusites. Jebus, who gave his name to it, was the son of Canaan, and the father of this people. It is supposed to have been first founded by Melchisedek, where he became king. About a century afterwards it was taken by the Jebusites—its name, which was Salem, changed by them, its walls extended, and its citadel on Mount Zion erected. From this period, to the days of David, it became partly inhabited by Jews and partly by Jebusites, the latter possessing all the power. The Psalmist now marched up against their stronghold and took it; expelled the Jebusites from the city, turned the citadel into a palace, constituted it the capital of the kingdom, (admirably situated as it was for this purpose, standing upon the borders of the territories both of Judah and Benjamin,) and changed its name into Jebus-salem, or, for the sake of euphony, into Jerusalem. And who can speak of this city of David without a thousand associations of thrilling interest! Its celebrity during his lifetime; its Temple, erected by Solomon, his illustrious son; its prophets and priests, of such note and worth; the honour which has been conferred upon it by the Almighty; its second Temple, and the noble services which for centuries were performed in both of them—the orders of their priests, the courts of their worship, the holy of holies, the ark, the mercy-seat, the shekinah; but, above all, the life and death of the Saviour of the world, and the establishment of his kingdom, "beginning at Jerusalem"—all stand before us associated for ever with this metropolis of Judaism.

Nay, the worship of God's people, in all ages, the Church of the living God in all lands, heaven itself as "the new Jerusalem," all have been bound up with the name of this one city, and make it memorable and glorious. Happy they who understand its mystic import, and have their names enrolled as its spiritual citizens!

No sooner had David established himself in Jerusalem, and constituted it the seat of his future government, than he determined to remove the ark thither. This was a most happy thought. Already he had largely regulated and greatly improved the government of the country; had reduced into order and method the army sustained by the tribes; and now for a long period the worship of the Lord had been neglected and the religious condition of the people had degenerated. To awaken at once the whole land to a sense of the importance of true religion, he called together thirty thousand chosen men of Israel, and went to Kirjath-jearim, where the ark now stood, in order to remove it to Mount Zion. Never, perhaps, was there a more impressive procession. Headed by the king himself, the sweet singer of Israel, and with a multitude of others who, both with the voice and with instruments of music, sang the praises of the Lord, followed by the chosen thirty thousand, from place to place they proceeded, attracting everywhere the nation's attention to the importance of divine service, and the sanctity of the ark as a memorial of the divine presence and mercy. At length they reached as far as a place called "the threshing-floor of Nachon," when an event occurred which deeply affected the heart of David and the people, and the rumour of which must have filled with awe the whole of Israel. Inadvertently the ark had been placed on a new cart, or carriage, whereon nothing had ever been laid, which was drawn by oxen. But Moses had commanded that it should always be carried on the shoulders of the Kohathites, a family of the tribe of Levi; and in no instance be touched. At

"the threshing-floor of Nachon" the oxen stumbled and shook the ark, so that it was in danger of being overturned, when Uzzah, putting forth his hand to sustain it, was in a moment struck dead. How necessary that the laws of God, to the very letter, as well as fully in the spirit of them, should be regarded! The slightest departure is dangerous; whilst, when once the line is overstepped, who can tell to what extent this spirit of disregard may lead us? Smitten with sorrow, David proceeded no further at this time, but had it placed in the house of Obed-edom, the Gittite, where it remained for three months.

It is not difficult to imagine how all this must have turned the attention of Israel towards the worship of Jehovah. Many of the young may scarcely have heard of the ark, so long did it remain in comparative obscurity at Kirjath-jearim. This very three months of breathing-time would be of service. Again David calls together his chosen men, removes it according to the appointment of the law, and, amidst much rejoicing, places it on Mount Zion in the Tabernacle which had been prepared for its reception, where the king and all the people sacrifice, and where David "blessed all Israel in the name of the Lord of Hosts; and he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as the men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine." A happy day in Jerusalem must have been the day when it received the ark. But what good work was ever yet attempted, without some evil eye falling upon it, and seeing it only to condemn! So was it now with Michal, the daughter of Saul, the wife of David, and who had again returned to him. In the language of bitter condemnation she reproaches the king for his condescension, and for the part he had taken amongst the people, particularly for his dancing before the ark—taunting him as if he had sought favour of the populace,

and especially of the women of Israel. He reminds her, in reply, that what he did was before the Lord, who had chosen him, and made him ruler over the people; therefore would he show them that he was ready to serve his God. For this, she was punished from that day, to the day of her death, with barrenness. Most important had it been, both for the moral and religious welfare of the world, had dancing been always such as David indulged in—a part of religious worship, solemn walking before the ark.

All now was peace and prosperity throughout the land. His enemies all around he vanquished—"the Lord preserving David whithersoever he went." He extends the boundaries of his kingdom on every side, making the nomade tribes of the desert subsidiary to his sway; he appoints great officers of state over each department of the affairs of the kingdom; remembers with much kindness the descendants of his predecessor, Saul; and gives to the son of Jonathan the very situation in his court which he himself had filled in the court of his grandfather. About this time the thought took hold of him of building a temple to the Lord, and he engaged the whole nation in the enterprise. Gold, silver, brass, are voluntarily poured into the treasury; beams of every order of timber are prepared; stones are dug and hewn; when he is informed by the Lord that the work should be done by his son and successor, who, unlike himself, should be a man of peace. Jehovah, however, honours David because he had it in his heart, and blesses all Israel for responding to his holy desire.

The reign of David, indeed, is a reign of warfare. Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, had died, and Hanun, his son, had succeeded him. The Psalmist recollected the kindness of Nahash, in protecting him during Saul's persecution; and he sent a friendly embassy to congratulate Hanun on his accession to the

throne. Ill advised, the king suspects the intention of the king of Israel, and maltreats his ambassadors. He "shaved off one-half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle," and in this degraded condition ordered their return. No insult, according to Eastern usage, could have been more contemptuous. On this account David determined to inflict upon them the most summary vengeance. Joab, the chief captain, with a large army, took the field against them, and on several occasions gained a complete victory. During this war it was, when David fell into that fearful sin, which, as the prophet Nathan said, gave "occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." Being on his housetop, he witnessed Bathsheba bathing. His heart was smitten after her with murderous lust: and "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Uriah was the husband of Bathsheba. To remove him out of the way of his treacherous purpose, he sent him with letters to Joab, which contained orders concerning himself—which orders were, that he should be placed in the front of the battle, that he might be slain. It was done: Uriah fell in the field, and Bathsheba became David's wife.

No excuse can be offered for this twofold sin of the king of Israel—his sin both of adultery and murder; nor does David himself, when his conscience was made fully alive to it, attempt to make an apology. When Nathan, the prophet, in that matchless parable of his of "the ewe lamb," in which he exhibits the rich man as oppressing and injuring the poor man, and as killing for his own purposes the poor man's lamb, "which was to him as a daughter lying in his bosom," brought home to him with fearful power his guilt with Bathsheba and his cruelty to Uriah, the king confessed it at once; and if we are to consider the fifty-first Psalm, which we are inclined to do, as the expression of his penitence for his awful criminality, though God forgave

him, scarcely does he seem ever to forgive himself. We attempt no mitigation of the Psalmist's guilt; but we would have all men to observe, that from this time all the troubles of David's family date their commencement. Thus did the prophet announce to him judgment, and that as connected with his own sin: "And Nathan said, Now the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised the Lord, and hast taken the wife of Uriah, the Hittite, to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord—Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun." Sin must bring punishment. Happy are they who are brought to repent of it, and who suffer for it only in the present world.

David was one of the fondest of fathers; and where he was most sensitive there the stroke must fall. In the language of the excellent Bishop Sanderson, "As Nathan foretold to him, so a world of mischief and misery fell out to him from this one presumptuous act. His daughter was defiled by her brother; that brother was slain by another brother; a strong conspiracy was raised against him by his own son; his concubines were openly defiled by the same son; himself afflicted by the untimely death of that son, who was his darling —reviled and cursed to his face by a base, unworthy companion; besides many other troubles, affronts, and vexations." But of all these trials, the most affecting was the revolt and death of Absalom. At the head of a powerful faction, he drove his father from Jerusalem, and reduced him to a state both of peril and penury. And when Joab, at the head of the army, went to the wood of Ephraim, in order to crush the rebellion, the orders of the king even then were, "Beware that none touch the young man, Absalom." This too, after all the evil, both personal and public, which he had heaped

upon his father—all the insults and injuries to which he had had him exposed. In person, this son of David appears to have been very beautiful; in character he was a fearful profligate; and as a son, he was as ungrateful as he was ungodly. The warrior Joab, however, was not to be deterred by such overweening parental affection. He put to flight the forces of the rebel. Absalom escaped; but in his haste his head was caught in the branches of a tree, and he was suspended in the air. In this condition, and nearly dead, Joab found him, and, heedless of the orders of the king, thrust him through with three darts and killed him. The tidings soon reached his father of his death; and in one of the most touching and beautiful parental laments ever penned, he exclaimed, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The last great error of David's reign, and one for which he was sorely punished, was his numbering of the people. Much discussion has arisen as to the nature of his sin in connection with this transaction; that it was esteemed an evil, even when it was proposed by him, appears from the fact that Joab, a man who was not over scrupulous in many matters, gave his decided opinion in opposition to the measure. The ordinary view of it is, that the object in taking the census was indicative of the pride of the king's heart in contemplating the number of subjects over which he ruled. We are inclined rather to consider it, with Bishop Sherlock, as consisting in a want of confidence in God. Long had David been taught that the strength of a kingdom was not the extent of its population, and that the success of an army lay not in the multitude of its forces, but in the presence, the power, and the prosperity, vouchsafed by the providence of God. This the Psalmist had frequently been shown, but in an unguarded hour forgot. Not that the numbering of the

people was in itself a sin; on the contrary, at times it was a duty. But it was the intention and object with which it was done, which rendered it condemnable. David had forgotten the promise given to Israel in the law—"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them, for the Lord thy God is with thee;" for this he is severely punished. The prophet Gad is sent to him, to remonstrate with him, and to offer him the choice of three judgments, any one of which would soon diminish the number of his people and of his fighting men. These were—seven years of famine; three months overcome and pursued by his enemies; or, three days' pestilence. He durst not make the choice himself, but leaves it, most wisely, with the Lord. Pestilence therefore was sent, through which fell, as victims to it, seventy thousand persons. What grief and shame must this have occasioned to David!

He was now advanced in years, and feeling his infirmities. The first child which he had by Bathsheba had died, causing him much sorrow. Next, Solomon was born to him: from his earliest childhood, he began to be distinguished; his choice before God was wisdom, and he gave him his choice. Adonijah, David's eldest son, had wickedly made an attempt to obtain the crown of Israel, grievously offending his father; and to put an end to all such conduct for the future, he determined to abdicate in favour of Solomon, and at once have him proclaimed king; he was now in his seventieth year, and Solomon in his eighteenth. The heads of the tribes, the chief captains, and all the leading men and representatives of the kingdom, were called together. The assembly was large and most imposing. The object of their meeting was momentous; silence reigned. All ears listened for the approach of the king. He entered; all eyes were now fixed upon him, all were

waiting his decision and advice. How changed now, he who, a stripling, had come from his flocks to attack Goliath! Ah, what ravages time creates! Feeble in voice, and step, and person, the king rose; he addressed first the multitude, according as he felt the wants of the nation, and was made to speak the mind of God. Then turning to his son, he announced him as his successor; placed upon him the work of building the Temple of the Lord; and thus spake to him, in words which ought never to be forgotten, on the subject of personal religion: "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." Six months after this, David died, and was buried in Mount Zion, "full of days, riches, and honour."

In attempting to estimate the character of the royal Psalmist, we would not conceal his defects, whilst we endeavour to appreciate his excellencies: he was but a man; many were his infirmities; great his sins. But those who would quote David's transgressions, in order to apologize for their own, ought in all honesty to call to mind his repentance as well as his guilt. Alas! they too often remember the one, and overlook the other. The Psalmist trusted in no righteousness of his own for salvation; God must cleanse him from his iniquity and wash him from his sins; he looked to Him, and in Him trusted, of whom he often wrote, who was to be set "a king upon his holy hill of Zion." As a man, he was distinguished for his talents, his tenderness of heart, his deep feelings, and his strong passions; as a father, he was loving and indulgent to a fault; as a warrior, he was brave without one cowardly misgiving of soul, and successful as he was brave; as a king,

he was just, orderly, and anxious exceedingly for his country's good, ruling in the fear of the Lord; as a poet, he was pathetic, descriptive, and beautiful more than sublime—though on occasions, also sublime; and through all ages will his songs reverberate through the hearts of the pious, and fill with divine praises the house of the Lord; as a prophet, he had clear views alike of the character, the work, the sufferings, the righteousness, and the kingdom of Messiah, and, as such, foretold his coming, humility, and glory; and as a believer, he had his faults, fell often short of his profession, but was devout, penitent, confiding, open-hearted, earnest, liberal, and loving, desirous of the glory of the great King, and did not shrink from advancing his cause.

Rest, son of Jesse! Toil, and care, and sorrow, are not scared away by a crown. Weary has been many a spirit, tempest-tossed many a heart, sore aching many a head, possessed of royalty. Thou too hadst thy trials as well as victories. Rest; for thy sleep is in him who was both thy son and thy Lord. We cannot think of thee, without referring also to him; he is on thy throne in the heavens. Thy tomb is here below; thy throne is on high. He reigns on that throne, and must reign till all his enemies are made his footstool: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Then, when "death is swallowed up in victory," and the ransomed shall return again with songs to Zion, no psalm shall be more divine, and no voice more melodious amidst the millions of the redeemed, than the song of the royal prophet, and the voice of "the sweet singer of Israel."

ELIJAH,

THE PROPHET OF MOUNT CARMEL.

THE REIGN OF AHAB, AND THE APPEARANCE OF ELIJAH.

It was now a dark day in Israel. Idolatry had supplanted the worship of the one living and true God throughout the land. False priests of various names, like spiritual banditti, had established their strongholds in the groves, and planted their altars upon the hills. Ahab reigned—a wicked and foolish king. The counsels of Jezebel, the idolatrous queen of Ahab, were now triumphant; and she multiplied the false priests and fed them. The people followed their king, and sunk into a condition of ignorance the most debasing, and of sin the most destructive. The judgments of God gathered over this once happy people; nor is it possible to look at all the circumstances connected with this part of their history, and not feel that these judgments were fearfully merited.

How Israel should have become idolatrous is a problem which can never be solved, except upon the principle of the complete depravity of human nature. Only remember how God guarded against such an occurrence, by the laws of Moses. "These are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land all the days that ye live upon the earth: ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods upon the high mountains, upon the hills, and upon every green tree; and ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down

the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of the place." It was the oft-repeated proverb of John Knox, that "to dislodge the rooks you must pull down the rookery;" but there never was a more perfect system of annihilation than that which the Lord enjoined upon Israel in reference to idolatry. Not a vestige of its former existence was to remain; nor were even the names of the false gods to be remembered.

With equal clearness and force were they instructed as to the manner in which they and their children were to retain Jehovah continually in their minds, as well as how they were to serve him. There was to be no mistake here. They were "to love the Lord their God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway." They were to call to their recollection continually the innumerable instances of his interference on their behalf, in emancipating them from bondage, and in overwhelming their enemies. The ark, the tabernacle, and the testimony, were to be ever in their midst and before their eyes—never were they to pray without turning their faces in their direction. God's laws were to be laid up in their hearts, placed as a signet upon their hands, and bound as a frontlet upon their foreheads. They were to teach them to their children, "speaking of them when sitting in the house, when walking in the way, when lying down, and when rising up." They were to be written upon the door-posts and placed upon the gates of their dwellings, that master and mistress, child and servant, might have them ever before them; and, as an all-actuating motive to induce to their observance, the land in which they dwelt was to be theirs so long as they obeyed, length of days was to be vouchsafed to them, and abundant prosperity was to attend upon all their endeavours. What a beautiful system was this of universal family instruction, and how strong and striking the means of its enforcement!

But how painful now the contemplation of Israel's fall—their groves crowded with idols, their mountains smoking with sacrifices, the name of Jehovah banished from the land with which he had blessed them, his altar forsaken, and his commandments forgotten or despised! And shall no voice be raised in Israel—no one who, with trumpet-tongue, fired with zeal for the divine glory, and filled with amazement, shame, and scandal at the condition to which this once highly-favoured people are now reduced, shall break the silence of these demon-bound plains, or burst upon the orgies of the false deities they harbour, with all the scathing might of the rapid lightning flash, followed with the still more terrible majesty of crash after crash, booming from amidst the darkness of the surcharged thunder-cloud? Yes; he comes, the man of God—the messenger of heaven! But the work must be done in God's own way. No matter; but let it be done. Never has Israel been entirely forsaken. The people shall be taught; the king shall be humbled; "that wicked woman and Jezebel" shall be punished; false priests shall flee before the Lord's prophet. He comes! the darkest hour of the night precedes the dawn. Behold Elijah, the commissioned of the Most High, the prophet of Mount Carmel! He is sent to break the silence, he appears to destroy the spell of a degrading idolatry.

ELIJAH ENTERS UPON HIS WORK.

It is scarcely possible to read the history of any illustrious character, or to become acquainted with his deeds of daring and acts of bravery, without forming to ourselves some conceptions of his stately bearing and commanding personal appearance. This may be natural; but the Spirit of God affords no food to mere curiosity. We have scarcely any particulars at all of the man Elijah. He is called "the Tishbite, who was of the

inhabitants of Gilead"—understood by some to refer to Tisbe, in Galilee, the birthplace of Tobit; but by others, to Thisbe: an interpretation which corresponds with the opinion of Josephus, who says that "Elijah was a prophet of Thisbon, a country of Gilead." This is the extent of private history which we possess of this distinguished Scripture hero. We are left to form our opinion of him from his works—in the choice made of him by the Almighty, in the missions on which he was sent, in the fidelity with which he wrought out the noble volume of his saintly life, and in the manner in which he established his prophetical reputation.

The first instance in which he appears upon the scene of action is in the presence of Ahab, the king. The cup of his own and his country's iniquity was now full and running over. Heaven must interfere. The prophets of the Lord were privileged men. The door of the court was not closed against them, though they came clad in rough garments and opened their lips to speak hard things. Nor shall Elijah fail to be faithful. His mission is commenced in his Master's name: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Ahab replies not; but we can do no otherwise than infer that he still hardened himself in his sin, heeded not the declarations of the prophet, but dared him to do what he thus threatened. It shall be done; for he who spake was the messenger of the God of Israel, the all-wise and omnipotent Jehovah.

But how shall the secret chemistry of the sun, the sky, and the earth, distilling the dew and dropping the plentiful rain, be stayed at the bidding of a man? For ages these have done their silent work unmolested, and afforded their needful refreshing according to the appointed seasons. Yea; but a man hath power with God to prevail. This is one of the wonders of the universe; still not less wonderful than true. Let a man fall in

with the will of his heavenly Father—let him accept of his proffered love and mercy—let him walk according to the course of the redeemed—and in the exercise of faithful asking, in the all-prevalent name of his Lord and Saviour, there is nothing necessary for his own salvation, or even in connection with his real usefulness to others, which God will not bestow. This is at once the privilege and the power of prayer. It takes hold of God; it enters and influences the heart of infinite affection; it moves the hand of Omnipotence; it possesses itself of the key of the treasuries of the universe; it shuts hell, it opens heaven; it stops the sun in his course, the earth in its diurnal motion—changes the destructive influence of fire, renders harmless the infuriated lion, unseals the eyelids of death, unveils the heaven of heavens, descries at the right hand of God a glorified Redeemer, places in his safe keeping the immortal soul, and, amidst a world in arms or on fire, gently "falls asleep." Such is prayer; and when a man, a prophet, is possessed of this amazing gift, and enjoys it in order to fulfil a special mission for the very God with whom he pleads, and whose throne is the throne of universal dominion, no rock but may be rent at his bidding, no sea but may separate before the magic touch of his pilgrim-staff, no wind or wave but may obey his call, and no secret process at work in nature's wonderful laboratory but may be stopped at his word.

Go then, Elijah, from the presence of the heartless, faithless Ahab! In his march from beneath those lofty palace domes, and from amongst that kingly retinue, wonders and mysteries hover around him, and hallow his path. Men see not how near he is to God, or how strangely he has armed him with judgment. Calm is his mien now; not a look of exulting pride glances across his thoughtful countenance. Grief fills his heart, sorrow suffuses with a saddening tear his eye. The

prophet's work must speedily commence, and wrath must exhaust the full cup. How he prayed—how on his knees he bent before the throne of the God of all the earth, or what were the words of his prayer, we are left to conjecture. He goes, by the command of God, to the brook Cherith, on the east of the Jordan, a few miles from the ford near Bethshan, the district surrounding which was well wooded, and in the rocks of the hills near to which were numerous caves. That is Elijah's retreat, and there he must remain. But how can he be fed? Drink he may, from the streamlet that gurgles at his feet; but who shall feed him? God has provided for his servant. The ravens themselves, greedy of flesh and longing for bread, shall forget their ravenous desires in a newly-created instinct of beneficence, and "they shall bring him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he shall drink of the brook."

The true servants of the Most High are the richest men in all the earth. Their bread is certain, and their water is sure. They may not be troubled with the care of large estates, or be called to suffer sleepless nights from the anxieties and shifts of 'Change; they are much better provided for. They know that their God will not leave them: in the cultivation of his vineyard they shall live and eat, and hereafter rest and rejoice.

Now all is sunshine. The sky of Israel is without a cloud; the sun pours down his beams in uninterrupted splendour; all is brilliance, all seems health. Where is that dotard prophet, who predicted such evil to the land? Wait, Ahab! your seeming mercies may yet turn out your sorest punishment. Let that cloudless sky continue cloudless, let those unbroken sunbeams continue to come down uninterrupted, and where is the green thing which shall not wither, the field that shall not become barren, or the stream that shall not become dry? And then, who is the dotard—the

prophet or the king? The people perishing of hunger and thirst; the cattle dying for want; the mother looking aghast upon her infant; and the father turning away, hungry and heart-broken, from his children's cry for bread—who shall be the wise man then? He who serves God, and has enough—or he who is the patron of idolatry, the persecutor of the pious and the good; a king, seated upon a throne rocking before the voice of his people's groans, ruling a land filled with spectres, and swaying a sceptre over the dying and the dead? Ahab, know thyself! Elijah is safe and well.

More than two years have passed away, without either rain or dew. Even Cherith, whither the prophet had been sent by God, has become dry. He too must remove, if he is to live. He is commanded to go to Zarephath, the Sarepta of the New Testament. His lodging is provided before he leaves. A widow woman of that city, and a very poor one, is to receive the prophet; nor shall she be injured by welcoming, even in a time of famine, to her lowly dwelling and humble board, one of the servants of Jehovah. Elijah at once obeys the Lord. Lonely and sad, he journeys towards Zarephath—sad, for Israel still clung to iniquity and Ahab to idols; and lonely, for he knew not of any amongst all the people who were faithful to the true God. His views were too desponding, but all was becoming very dark. As he drew near to the gates of the city, he found the widow, seemingly in a condition of extreme poverty, and "she was gathering sticks." The prophet addressed her, and asked her for water, which she was hastening to bring to him; and then for a morsel of bread, when she was forced to reply, "I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Poor widow! thine is indeed a sad plight; but "thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy

Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." He will be better to thee than ten husbands. Only believe and obey. "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son." Her faith stands even this test. "She went and did according to the saying of Elijah; and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail."

Miracle after miracle must be wrought by the prophet, to establish, both to himself and others, the divine origin of his mission. This poor widow's only son fell sick; "and his sickness was so sore, that no breath was left in him." In the agony of her grief, the widow reflects on Elijah. But she must be taught the mercy of the Lord, by the power which he reveals unto his servants, and enjoy the blessing which is in store for all those who welcome whom he has sent. He asks for her dead child—she gives him into the prophet's arms. He takes him up into the loft, to the little room where he was wont to lodge. There he lay upon the lad, and prayed and cried unto the Lord; and his breath returned, death departed, his soul revived; and Elijah brought him to his widowed mother, joyfully saying, "See, thy son liveth!" From this time was she fully convinced of the prophetical character of him who thus sojourned beneath her roof. But why this widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon? There were many widows in Israel, during this season of sore trial? But now, in his own country, Elijah was deemed a curse, not a blessing. To him did they attribute their painful afflictions. They would not turn to themselves, nor know and repent them of their own sins, that God might have mercy. Any one rather than themselves they were prepared to blame—a fatal but common error, and one which of all others stands most in the way of individual penitence and personal reformation.

But Elijah must no longer remain in obscurity. For three years the drought and famine had now continued. The prophet has a new commission. He must show himself once more to Ahab, the king, and give rain again to Israel. Fearful had been the sufferings of the people; especially, it would appear, in Samaria. Meantime, the king called Obadiah, the governor of his household, and divided the land—commanding Obadiah to go one way, and he himself would go another way, seeking by every brook and fountain for grass for his horses and mules, to save them alive. A monster still is Ahab, regarding more the wants of his cattle than the sufferings of his people—more the necessities of his horses, than the endurance of men, women, and children, his subjects.

Alas for the nations, with such rulers and great men! Nor are they even now quite weeded out of the world. In times of distress there are still those who are more concerned about the kennel than the cottage, and who, in this day of enlightenment and education, spend more to obtain a favourite animal, or rare plant, than in the cultivation and instruction of all the cottagers on their estates. All such anomalies Christianity is destined to uproot and destroy. Men must be taught; the love and honour which man owes to man must become common; rulers will learn rightly to appreciate their subjects, and subjects to rejoice in righteous rulers; the strong will feel it to be a privilege to help the weak, and the weak will be happy in the assistance afforded by the strong. "For they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain; for the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

The state of feeling now prevalent in Israel was one of loud and deep condemnation of Elijah. This is revealed in the question with which he is met, the moment he appears in the presence of Ahab. On his way

thither, Elijah comes into contact with Obadiah. This ruler of Ahab's household was a truly good man. Deeply does he seem to have lamented the condition of things in his unhappy country, and the conduct of Jezebel in destroying the Lord's prophets, and in aiding the priests of idolatry; whilst with his own hand he saved a hundred of the prophets, "hiding them by fifties in a cave, and feeding them with bread and water." Elijah commands Obadiah to go and tell his idolatrous master that he had come. He at first refuses, fearful of what the wrath of Ahab would lead him to inflict both upon Elijah and himself, as the bearer of such an unwelcome message, especially as he had previously been known as the friend of the prophets. At last he goes. Ahab and Elijah meet—two such opposite characters; the one the champion of truth, and the other of error; the one the servant of God, and the other the bondsman of Baal. Never, in the age of chivalry, had such antagonists come into collision—never had two met to decide a more important cause, or to work out a nobler issue. The strife is for truth; the battle-field is the Lord's; angels, men, and devils, await in breathless expectancy the result of the conflict. It is the cause and the conflict of all lands; it has been decided long ago in Israel; it has only to be carried out in all countries, that the earth may yield its increase, men return to and rejoice in the Lord, the nations rest in peace, and the rulers and the ruled together give the glory to him who is God over all.

ELIJAH AT MOUNT CARMEL.

When kings, and the counsellors of kings, assemble, nations listen in breathless silence, that they may ascertain the subject of conference, and learn the results of distinguished diplomacy. Too frequently the lauda-

tory language of national intercourse has been mere hollow hypocrisy—honied words without meaning, and flattering titles void of truth. When Ahab and Elijah met, they had no time for courtly parlance. Israel suffered, and the prophet was considered the cause of the affliction. Enraged, the king demands, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" With as little ceremony, Elijah greets the ears of Ahab with the unwelcome truth—"I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." Nor will the prophet let the matter rest with mere words. All Israel was deceived; the error must be rectified, and the falsehood must be exposed. Here we have the real secret and occasion of Elijah's demand to meet the people at Mount Carmel, in the presence of the priests of Baal—it is to confound and to confute them; it is that the true God may be exalted, the false deities now worshipped be exposed, the people be instructed in their own good, the idolatrous priests be punished, and the king and wicked Jezebel be taught better, or be taken down from the seat of their godless sway.

"Baal," or "Bel," a name so often occurring in Scripture, signifies "ruler," or "governor," and is the name of the chief male idol of the heathen who dwelt in Palestine. It is generally believed that Baal was intended to represent the sun, the ruler or governor of the day, and of fire, or light and heat. Ashtaroth was the name of the female idol of corresponding importance to Baal, called by Jeremiah "the Queen of Heaven," and is admitted to have represented the moon, the ruler of the night. These two idols were now the gods worshipped by the Israelites—from the king downward, throughout the masses of the people. For the furtherance of the service of Baal there were four hundred and fifty priests, and for that of Ashtaroth about four hundred;

the latter sustained by Jezebel. Every grove and vale, hill and mountain, had now its altar; and upon these, on great occasions, not only the sacrifices of animals, but those of human beings, were offered. Conceive of a land, once filled with the light of the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, engaged in his holy services, and happy in his love, now so sinful and dark, reason prostrate, immorality made part of worship, Jehovah dishonoured, his prophets slain or obliged to conceal themselves, falsehood triumphant, and the whole population prostrate and suffering. Unhappy Israel, how changed! yet not forsaken. Well may Elijah desire that an opportunity be given to him of meeting the assembled people, that they may know that "the Lord reigns."

King Ahab could not refuse the righteous demand of the prophet; and indeed the state of the country was now such, that some step must immediately be taken. Messengers are sent to all parts, summoning an assembly of the people at Mount Carmel. Mount Carmel is a remarkable promontory, overlooking the Bay of Acre, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. It is one of a range of summits extending from north-west to south-east, sheltering the noble plain of Esdraelon, giving impulse to the ancient river Kishon, which passes through the plain, and rising in some cases to a height of from fifteen hundred to two thousand feet above the level of the sea. On the extending sides of this mountain range, all known as Carmel, the people congregated. Here, it has been thought, one of the schools of the prophets was established. But on no occasion was such a lesson ever taught and such an immediate interference of Jehovah ever manifested, as on this occasion. This is the question in dispute, and to be decided for a whole people—"Who is the Lord, that we may worship him?" This is the great question of all ages, and all worlds. To welcome error here,

is to choose hell; to embrace truth here, is to secure heaven.

The people had been coming from all quarters towards Carmel for days. On the morrow, Elijah and the false prophets are to meet and to test their power. Many a heart beats with high expectancy, in the anticipation of this wonderful conflict. Groups gather together on the mountain side and in different parts of the plain, engaged in exciting conversation and debate. There is very little repose for the multitudes. The first streaks of the approaching day already tinge the east, and gently touch the mountain summits. The sleepers, the few of them that there are, begin to awake, and to watch the progress of events. Rapidly the day breaks. Over the plain, with boisterous mirth and in high confidence, are seen approaching the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, and their attendants. Before the day closes, they hope to see an end of this troubler of Israel—to have the country wholly to themselves, and more firmly than ever to bind in the fetters of their foul embrace both king and people. How little do men know, amidst what changed circumstances their sun of a single day may rise and set! Ahab the king, and his attendants, are also present on the occasion.

But Elijah has not yet arrived. "Will he come?" is the inquiry which has become universal. The impression is general, that he has shrunk from the ordeal which he himself has sought. The conclusion, like too many of the conclusions of a sin-loving infidelity, is rather that which many wished might happen, than that in which they really believed. In a moment all eyes are turned towards a solitary traveller. With steady step and fixed look, he makes his way towards the expectant crowd. Many a heart would have quailed before such a task as that which Elijah had now undertaken. The king takes no notice of the prophet. The proud priests of Baal, standing aloof and looking askance at

Elijah, gaze with scorn at his mean garb and helpless appearance. Let them look and wonder; "greater is he that is with him, than all they that are against him." Nor does he stand long unoccupied: time is short, and he would "redeem the time." Boldly he proclaims his challenge before the assembled people: we must give it in his own words. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." To this there is no reply. Amidst solemn silence the prophet resumed. "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be the God." This challenge and all its conditions were so fair—especially as the descending of heavenly fire had always been esteemed the symbol of present deity, and as Baal was the god of light or fire, that all the people shouted out, "It is well spoken;" and Ahab and the priests of Baal were obliged to comply.

Now comes the moment of anxiety and eager expectation. The priests of Baal build their altar, place upon it their sacrifice, and put no fire under it. It was morning. Elijah permitted them to commence; he confidently awaiting the result. They began calling upon their God—leaping, dancing, and shouting, according to their custom in their base worship. From the four hundred and fifty voices comes the cry, "O Baal, hear us!" This they continue till noon, but they have no response. Maddened with rage, they leap upon the altar; still they have no answer. With bitter irony, Elijah, standing by, mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing,

or he is on a journey, or he is sleeping and must be awakened." Still they cry aloud, and cut themselves, after their manner; and this they continued till evening, before Ahab and all the people—but there was neither voice, nor any answer, nor any one that regarded. The time of the evening sacrifice was now come; and if the dispute is to be decided, Elijah must commence his offering. The prophet bids all the people draw near. He takes twelve stones, a stone for each of the tribes; with these he builds an altar, digs a trench round about it, places the wood and prepares the sacrifice. At his request, and that there might be no dispute, four barrels of water are emptied three times successively on the altar, the wood, and the sacrifice, till the trench is filled, and the water runs around the whole place. He now lifts up his hands towards heaven; engages in solemn prayer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and pleads that he might honour his name before all Israel: when scarcely had the prayer escaped his lips, before it is answered—"the fire of the Lord fell;" it burns up the sacrifice, destroys the wood, and dries up all the water. With a shout that rent the air, the people, falling with their faces to the earth, cried with one accord, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God!" Where now, ye haughty priests of Baal, is that lonely, despicable man—and who now is the honoured of the people? Elijah is but a type of all true men and true ministers: they may be despised and shunned—let them labour on; their enemies, even as the enemies of their Lord, shall lick the dust.

The sequel of this famous struggle has occasioned much disputation, in connection with the conduct of Elijah to his prostrate antagonists. Why should he take those pitiable priests, and put them to death? The reply is, that he acted in accordance with the command given by the Lord to his people:—"And the prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because

he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God. If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee, thou shalt not consent unto him or hearken unto him, but thou shalt surely kill him. For the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die." Thus Elijah had been greatly to blame, had he allowed the false priests of Baal to escape. They are seized and slain. Now Israel is restored to the Lord, and immediately a blessing follows. In the west, a cloud appears like a man's hand. Haste to your chariot, Ahab! the rain comes. Speed you, lest it should stay you in the way; and after three years and six months, the sky once more pours its refreshing showers upon the parched fields and vineyards of famine-smitten Israel.

ELIJAH FOUND IN THE WILDERNESS.

How could the prophet ever lose confidence in God, after the manner in which he had heard his prayer, and convinced the people? Most likely he felt as though he never could. But the most dangerous moment in a believer's life is immediately after he has been upon the mount, having enjoyed special blessings from his God, and found himself mighty to the dismay of his enemies. He is tempted to repose after his triumph, to imagine that his bow can never be broken, to believe that his mountain standeth strong, to cease from watching, and to expose himself as an open prey to the invader. Never was this more completely verified than in the history of Elijah. Ahab had returned to his palace, as the prophet had commanded him. He informs Jezebel of all that had happened. Enraged, the queen sends to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I

make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." Man is immortal till his work is done. If God has anything for his servant to accomplish, neither Jezebel nor Beelzebub shall be able to injure him. The wicked may plot unseen, God rules on high; the hand of man may hold the bow and shoot the arrow, Jehovah determines whether or not it shall strike; a wicked woman may seek the prophet's life, the length of his days on earth are all numbered by the Lord. Yet Elijah trembles and flees. The undaunted prophet of yesterday is the crouching coward of to-day. He has a lesson to learn. At best, how weak are the strongest of men!

The life of man began with probation in paradise—a probation by which he should be tested whether he should serve the Lord, and continue in his friendship. The life of man still is one of trial; and often are events permitted to occur, by which our remaining weakness is revealed to us, and through which we are led to see how constantly we require an ever-present and strength-affording Saviour. Elijah was not yet perfect. He was "a man subject to like passions as we are." He must be taught what counsels to follow, what voice to hear, what confidence to exercise, what paths to shun, and what course to pursue. Go where he may, he will discover that he cannot flee from the Lord. Go where he may, he has to learn that he is safe when he is doing the Lord's work. He has now turned his back on the people who, before his voice and sacrifice, proclaimed but yesterday that "the Lord, he is the God;" and he has fled from the borders of Israel into the bleak and barren wilderness. He is seated beneath the shade of a juniper tree; there he falls asleep—he sleeps to dream; and in his dream he is awoke by the touch of a hand, and voice saying to him, "Arise and eat." Awaking, he perceives "a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head." He refreshed himself, and again

lay down to rest. A second time an unseen hand arouses him, and a voice addresses him—"Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee." He did so; and on the strength of that miraculous nourishment, for forty days and nights he travelled till he came to Mount Horeb.

We tread once more on hallowed ground. Hoary-headed Horeb, thou mountain of many sighs and many songs, in thy desert grandeur thou sittest a king! Around thy head, history, that iron-fingered warrior against death and forgetfulness, has woven its beautiful garlands of immortal recollections, and placed them upon thy imperial brow. From thy caverns, the voice of Moses ever issues to greet the traveller's ear; at thy base, the bush ever burns to cheer his hope and strengthen his faith; around thy cloud-capt summits of Jebal Musa or Jebal Katrine, blackness and thunder, the tearing earthquake and soothing voice, still shake and speak. Receive the lone traveller into thy most secret bosom. Long has been his journey, great his fears, and painful his reflections. Let him rest—but it shall not be long. He who sighs in thy deep cavern will yet sing upon thy lofty peak!

It is in reality about a hundred and fifty miles, in a straight line, from Beersheba to Horeb. Either therefore Elijah must have followed a circuitous route, or have journeyed by short stages. He takes up his abode in a cave of the mount, generally supposed to have been the same which sheltered Moses. Here on the hard earth he lies, with no companion but his pilgrim-staff, and no covering but the flinty roof of the cave and his prophet's mantle. In his solitude, he is congratulating himself on his secresy and safety: when, in an instant, in that tenantless wild, bursts upon his ears a voice, thrilling his inmost soul by the inquiry—"What doest thou here, Elijah?" The question must have come upon him like a thunder-clap. What! no work to do,

no mission to fulfil, no warning voice to awake a sinful, slumbering world? Do these rocks need thee; or is thy solitude, safety, and rest to be sought, and not the honour of thy God? But man is never without an excuse for his folly or his sin. Far more ingenuity is in general exhibited in apologizing for what is not done, or for what is sinfully done, than what is manifested in the discovery of the sublimest truth, or in the fulfilment of the most ennobling duties. Nor was Elijah without his reason, as he imagined, for his present retreat. To the question, thrice put, he as frequently replies, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." How few of our excuses for retreating from the field of pious effort are availing in the light of God! Most usefully may the best of men study Elijah's answer, weigh its plausibility, and then learn how they, who lose their lives for Christ's sake and the gospel, still gain them.

Elijah, by the command of God, comes forth and stands upon the summit of Horeb. A scene now presents itself to his eyes, such as even he had never witnessed; which no pen but the pen of inspiration can describe, and which no age or circumstance has ever paralleled. The Lord passes before the prophet; and, behold! he is followed by a mighty wind, rending the rocks asunder, tearing up trees by the root, and breaking the mighty stones to pieces like brittle parchment. The affrighted prophet wraps around him his mantle, and shakes as he gazes on the scene of awful desolation. But in a moment this is followed by an earthquake; its deep, hollow, muffled voice grumbling throughout the mountain, making it to reel and stagger, splintering its flinty ribs, and surrounding the prophet with yawning, bottomless gulfs, ready to entomb him. And before he

can bethink himself, gather his scattered thoughts, and calm his fears, the whole mountain is on fire; forked flames burst from every fissure, circle round every stone, dance on every summit, and exhibit nothing but one unbroken spectacle of certain destruction. He flees before the overwhelming elements into the cavern, for shelter. But these are only the retinue of the Lord, and follow him—he is neither in the wind, nor the earthquake, nor the fire. They are his servants, and at his bidding do his work. Still they injure not the prophet; they are not engaged for his injury. And can he who controls the wind, manages the earthquake, and limits the rage of the consuming fire, not keep his servant's life in safety before the wrath of Jezebel or her murderous priests? But hark! a voice still and small, melting as the sweetest music, falling soft and gentle as the distilling dew, arrests the prophet, and brings him to the cave's mouth. Well Elijah knows that voice. God is there—not to destroy, but to save; not to condemn, but to instruct. The prophet's mantle covers his face; meekly now he listens; and whilst he would fondly urge his former plea for his retreat and concealment, it must not be. God has need of him, and he must go. He does not hesitate; but in a spirit of confiding and lowly obedience complies, doing what the Good Shepherd commands, and following wherever he leads. Nor could he leave that mount, boldly descending where he formerly timorously crept, without singing where he formerly sighed.

It has been wisely observed, that the place of duty is the place of safety. The inquiry, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" is one which the Christian ought ever to be able gratefully to answer. But oh, how often those who profess to follow, "the still small voice" of the gospel, are found in places and occupy themselves in pursuits which can bear no such test! In the ball-room, professing Christian, "what doest thou here?" At

the gambling-table, "what doest thou here?" In the theatre, "what doest thou here?" Nay; in the village, the poor street, the market-place, the highway, or the hall, "what doest thou"—thine own work, or thy God's? What opportunities the people of God often lose of doing good, as they journey in the railway with those they may never again see till they meet them at the judgment; or in the course of friendly communion or business, when conversation becomes commonplace, and interest flags for want of an object! Happy for the world that day, when Christians shall become as their Master, and, like him, be continually doing good.

Elijah returns from Horeb by the way of the wilderness of Damascus, and discovers, to his great joy, that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bent the knee to Baal. These old prophets were highly honoured men. They both blessed and cursed kings—they anointed and dethroned them; but they were only the voice and the hand of God in all such doings. There was an immediate divine right attaching to rulers in these early times. "Divine right" men, in these later days, hold the principle in the succession of sovereigns; they are no advocates for it in depriving royalty of its rights, when it is inimical both to the truth of God and the liberties of the people. Yet the one was as manifestly exercised as the other. Rulers exist not for their own personal aggrandisement, but for the good of the people over whom they rule; and this just because order and liberty in kingdoms demand authority and law. Let them reign simply for their own ends, and they are no longer sovereigns according to the true principle of divine right; their own acts disannul the contract; they are a curse, and not a blessing—a judgment, that which God never sends for a permanency.

Divinely guided into Syria, Elijah, by the command of God, anoints Hazael king of that land. Pressing forward, by the same authority, Jehu, the son of Nim-

shi, is appointed by him over Israel. Now he himself must have a successor. Here, too, infallible wisdom must choose. Elijah finds Elisha, the son of Shaphat, ploughing with his oxen in the field. He casts his mantle over him. Elisha very speedily relinquishes his occupation and follows the prophet.

We hear much, in our day, of the true succession in the Christian ministry. We have no faith in any succession of mere men. Truth is eternal—men are mortal. The Church is not a foundation of dying men, but of living truth. He, therefore, is in that succession, who is a possessor of the truth. None are, who are without this divine gift; no matter by what hands ordained, in what Church ministering, however eloquent, or however followed. Without the truth we are without God, and without God we cannot be sharers in his work. Besides, if the apostles had only one special class to succeed them, they must have been commanded by God to call and ordain their successors. We hear nothing of the apostles ever doing this: we hear of them preaching the truth, planting churches, and setting them in order; and of the believers scattered abroad, going everywhere preaching the word. But, we repeat it, we read of no divinely-chosen and divinely-ordained successors to the apostles, and therefore are bound to conclude that there were none; but that holy men, welcoming Christ, having gifts for teaching and preaching, feeling constrained to give themselves to this work, were from the beginning, as now, the true ministers of the Lord Jesus. Elijah was divinely instructed to select Elisha: if the apostles were to have had successors, they also would have been directed to choose in like manner.

What changes are wrought in a very few years! Now, when the prophet is returning to complete his mission, Ahab closes his wretched reign. Covetousness is a sin so completely opposed to the genius of

real religion, that it often meets with the most marked disapprobation of Jehovah. This was strikingly exemplified in the life of this king of Israel. He had desired to possess Naboth's vineyard, which lay near to his palace in Samaria. The poor man wished not to part with his family inheritance—and why should he? Jezebel, that Ahab might be gratified, concocted against Naboth a disgraceful charge of blasphemy. For this, of which he was altogether innocent, he is barbarously put to death. Elijah is sent to the king to denounce his evil-doing. He is met by him as his enemy; yet the denunciation of the divine vengeance appears for the moment to have "humbled him;" and well was it for his own sake that it did so. Still, as the prophet had foretold, this most covetous and wicked of the kings of Israel, going up in his chariot to battle at Ramoth-Gilead, is mortally wounded, retires from the conflict to die, and, in the place where Naboth was stoned to death, did the dogs lick up his blood. The death of Jezebel was still more terrible. When Jehu entered Jezreel, she sought to insult him; was cast from the window whence she spake; was trampled under foot of the horses, and perished as the prophet had predicted: "In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel." An awful warning is the end both of Ahab and his queen, to those who forsake the service of the Lord, who follow idols, and who delight themselves in the ways of transgression!

The last public act of Elijah occurred in connection with the death of Ahaziah, the idolatrous son of Ahab. He "fell down through a lattice that was in Samaria;" meaning, that his fall was from the roof of his palace into the court below. This happened in the second year of his reign. Anxious to ascertain whether he should recover, and acting as if there were no prophet of the Lord in the land, he sends messengers to Ekron to consult the idol god there. They are met by Elijah,

and are commanded to go back and tell the king—"Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." The message enraged Ahaziah. He sends a captain and fifty men to seize the prophet; "and, behold! he sits on the top of a hill." They command him, as a man of God, to come down. He refuses, calls down fire from heaven to destroy them, and in a moment they are reduced to ashes. This is repeated a second time. A third party is sent, and on his bended knees their captain pleads with him to come and appear before the king. Elijah yields, and goes into the presence of Ahaziah. Unabashed, he once more reminds him of his disregard to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of his own idolatrous practices, and announces his approaching end. Nor did one word of what the prophet uttered fail of its accomplishment—so sure is the testimony of the Most High. The king died: he is succeeded by Jehoram, his brother, "who wrought evil in the sight of the Lord."

ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION.

Under every dispensation of divine grace Jehovah has shown, that whilst Death, the king of terrors, exercises universal empire over the human race, still, that his rule is neither absolute nor uninterrupted. During the patriarchal age, "Enoch was not, for God took him," teaching the world in that period that there was a hand mighty to conquer Death—a power omnipotent to invade his dark dominion. During the Mosaic economy Elijah must be translated, to instruct that age of the still presiding Majesty of Heaven among men, and of his presence and unchecked control over the region of the dead. Not that either Enoch or Elijah underwent no

change equivalent to death. This debt they were bound to pay, even as others. But the common enemy of man could not detain them, when God needed them. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they were changed; a moment more, and, soul and body, they were in the realms of the glorified.

Nor has the Christian dispensation been without an equally eloquent chapter in regard both to the resurrection and the life. The great Author and Finisher of the Faith went himself into the realms of the universal Destroyer. In his power he remained for days. On the morning of the third day, he burst the bands of the grave, rose from the slumber of the tomb, announced his power over death, in due time ascended on high, "leading captive captivity," and appeared before God the first fruits of the resurrection of the world. These glorious facts are intended by the Sovereign of the Universe to fill our dying world with hope. How fearful the havoc, in the history of all ages, occasioned by disease and death! "Sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, because that all have sinned." What parting scenes have been witnessed, what bitter tears have been shed, what agonies have been endured, what lovely "tabernacles of clay" have been taken down! But they are not annihilated. In the secret recesses of nature, seen only by nature's Lord, even in the youngest victim of death there still remains a germ of life. There will be "the restitution of all things." Then there will be meeting occasions, joyfully to wipe out for ever the remembrance of parting ones; then happy smiles for saddening tears, heavenly joys for dying agonies, a spiritual body for a natural one, a glorified for a corrupt existence, death swallowed up in victory, and life for ever with the Lord!

The time of Elijah's translation had arrived. He goes up with Elisha to Gilgal. On the way, the prophet

tests his successor as to his fidelity. Elisha determines to follow him. At Bethel, they meet with "the school of the prophets." Elijah's departure from the world appears to have been revealed to them. They discover also that it is known to Elisha. "The sons of the prophets" at Bethel were fifty in number. At a distance they watch the "two seers," as they go together towards the banks of the Jordan. Elijah smites it with his mantle, the waters divide, and they walk through dry-shod. What wilt thou have of me, Elisha? inquires the prophet. Nothing short of a double portion of his master's spirit will satisfy him. The sign of this petition being granted was to be, his seeing Elijah's departure. They journey and commune together. Oh, what precious moments, before they are for ever parted on earth! In an instant, the Lord arrives. In a chariot of fire, with horses of fire, Elijah mounts to heaven; Elisha witnesses his triumph, and shouts, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," and he saw him no more. He seizes the mantle which the ascending prophet had dropped, again divides the Jordan, hastens to "the sons of the prophets," and is welcomed in Elijah's stead.

Thus this honoured servant of Jehovah exchanged this vale of tears for the regions of everlasting bliss, this world of darkness for the world of eternal day. To visit the earth long afterwards, was his peculiar privilege. Centuries had passed away with him in heaven, before the arrival of that remarkable season. Now the Son of God had left the bosom of the Father, appeared in the form of a servant, tabernacled a man of sorrows in our world, and hastened to die upon the cross. Heavenly light must once more encircle him, before competent witnesses, ere he encounters "the hour and the power of darkness." Moses, the leader and lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, their most distinguished prophet, are sent from on high to pay him homage, to

rejoice that in him both the law and the prophets meet their fulfilment, and "to talk of the decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem." These glorified servants of Jehovah stand with Christ on the mount of transfiguration, they hold communion with their Saviour, and depart again to glory. Blessed fact! it is not impossible for the redeemed to visit this earth in connection with Christ and his cause. Who can tell, but all who are now in heaven, as occasion requires and God missions, "are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"—glorified parents above, ministering to believing children below; glorified friends gone before, ministering to those who still "wrestle with principalities and powers," "passing through much tribulation" to their rest. Inspiring consideration! "See thou do it not," said the messenger in the Apocalypse to John, when he fell down at his feet to worship him, "for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets." Oh, then, these brethren can come and succour saints below!

Farewell, prophet of Mount Carmel! this earth contains not thy dust. With that of Enoch before the flood, with thy Saviour after his suffering, resurrection, and ascension to the midst of the throne, thy body, formerly one of decay, is now one of abiding glory. Entering heaven, the redeemed from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, have been long attracted to thee, to contemplate that complete salvation which they are yet to enjoy. Our eyes, too, hope to see and study thy heavenly splendour. Beautiful image of the Redeemer, Elijah! But forgotten be Enoch, forgotten be Elijah, forgotten be the ransomed from every land, in the all-absorbing sight of "the Lamb that was slain." "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

ELISHA,

THE PROPHET OF THE SUCCESSION.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA COMPARED.

THE life of Elisha, the successor of Elijah, is brought before us in the inspired writings in the form of a moving panorama, unfolding incident after incident of thrilling interest. There is scarcely time to breathe between the representations; no sooner do we hear his call, by divine direction, to the prophetical office, and witness his inauguration by having cast around him the prophet's mantle, than we see him leaving his plough and twelve yoke of oxen, bidding farewell to his relatives and friends, and accompanying his master. This is speedily followed by the dividing of the waters of the Jordan, and the last journey on earth of the prophet and his successor. As they talk, they are separated. We behold him now gazing after Elijah, wafted on high in a chariot of fire, with horses of fire. He seizes his falling mantle; with it parts the Jordan, and recrosses it; receives the obeisance of "the sons of the prophets," and enters immediately on his exalted mission.

It is not our design to compare prophet with prophet, so as to magnify the doings of one at the expense of the works of another, but to show how Jehovah raised up, qualified, and made use of them all, in the day, the circumstances, and the manner in which they were required. Each had his own distinctive peculiarities and endowments, and the spirit of inspiration destroyed none of them. They were used according to their individual

idiosyncrasies, the Spirit of God subordinating their different powers to the divine purpose for which they were selected; and throughout their varied labours, there is no difficulty in discovering their personal identities. How manifestly the meekness and prudence of Moses, the penitential piety of David, the fire and poetry of Isaiah, the lachrymose spirit of Jeremiah, the wisdom and manliness of Daniel, the zeal of Peter, the love of John, and the intellectuality of Paul, appear in all their writings and actions!

True, in comparing Elijah and Elisha, the former in many respects stands forth to appearance by far the more commanding prophet of the two. This, to some extent, may be accounted for by his being the first introduced in the peculiar circumstances of seer-like teaching and rebuke to which both were called, as well as from the difference of prophetical incident occurring in their lives; these being in the one case more public and impressive, in the other equally important, but not so imposing. Hence many view Elisha as merely a kind of subdued echo of his great predecessor; not so, however. All the works of God are infinitely diversified, so also are his ways. There is a milder radiance observable, encircling the brow of Elisha, than that which shot from the eye and blazed around the forehead of Elijah; but on that account it is not the less lovely. The lily is not the less beautiful because its bloom is not as gaudy as the rose. Melancthon was not like Luther, yet both were true men in their order. Wesley was not Whitfield; yet both were needed, and each in his own way did a blessed work. The qualifications and mission of Elisha differed from both the endowments and achievements of Elijah.

The state of Israel, at the period when this prophet entered upon his work, was one of great darkness and distress. The wicked king Ahab was dead, but the idolatrous queen Jezebel still lived. Ahaziah, the son

and successor of Ahab, had also been summoned to the grave because of his forgetfulness of Jehovah, and his attachment to idols. Jehoram, the second son of Ahab, was king. Polluted by the foulest atrocities in the hands of his predecessors, the sceptre of Israel was now held by one who, frightened in a degree by the judgments of the Lord which his kindred and country had suffered, went not to the same extremities of evil. He had removed, for example, the abominable Sidonian idol which his father had set up, but he still continued, both at Dan and Bethel, the golden calves of Jeroboam, and permitted Jezebel, his mother, to patronize and support the priests of idolatry. The religion of the country being still the religion of false gods, it is not to be wondered at that "darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people." Such was the condition of Israel at the moment when Elisha, like a rainbow of promise, shone forth amidst the gloom, teaching everywhere, and warning all he came near, saying, "Know, O Israel! the Lord thy God."

ELISHA AT JERICHO, BETHEL, AND CARMEL.

"The sons of the prophets" who witnessed Elijah's departure in the chariot of fire, appear to have been aware that he was about to be removed from them, but do not seem to have known that his departure was final. They ask of Elisha to be permitted to go and seek for him, hoping that he had again descended, even as he had ascended. Their search was of course in vain: then was Elisha fully recognized as "the prophet of the succession."

From the earliest times, the city of Jericho is associated with some of the most remarkable displays of a special providence, and of the divine blessing as accompanying a special people. Here first our prophet exhibits the possession of miraculous powers. The plain

of Jericho, in which the city lay, is one extending for many miles, even from Scythopolis to the bay of the Dead Sea. It is encircled by ridges of rugged, barren mountains. The ancient city was situated to the north-east of Jerusalem about twenty miles, and six from the river Jordan. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was through these desolate mountain passes and deep defiles —in all ages a most dangerous way, infested by banditti of the worst character. With beautiful appropriateness, our Saviour spake the instructive parable of the good Samaritan in reference to this very hazardous road: showing not only what was too common in it, robbery with cruelty, but also the still greater necessity for assistance, and the true human sympathy of him who aided the injured traveller; as well as, in more condemnatory contrast, the hard-heartedness both of the priest and Levite.

It must have been a solemn spectacle, that of a whole people carrying the ark, the visible symbol of their covenant relation to their present and all-powerful God, marching for seven days in order around the city of Jericho, once every day for six days, and seven times on the last day, with no sound but the rough music of the rams' horns, accompanying it on the seventh day with a shout from the whole multitude; when immediately the city walls fell to the ground, and every man entered at the place opposite to him. The city, by divine appointment, being doomed, they set fire to it, consecrating all the gold, silver, and brass, and from amongst its inhabitants saving only Rahab and her family, because of her kindness to the spies. Joshua pronounced on it an anathema, not only as it then stood, but on him who should, on the same site, attempt to rebuild it. Very remarkably this was fulfilled. Hiel, of Bethel, five hundred and thirty-seven years afterwards, restored the city. At the laying of its founda-

tions, he lost his eldest son, Abiram; and when the gates were hung, his youngest son, Segub.

Another Jericho, however, was erected a short time after Joshua's destruction of the former. It stood in the same plain, and is that which, in the Book of Judges, is called "a city of palm trees." Here the ambassadors of King David remained after they had been maltreated by the Ammonites, till their beards were grown again; and near to which the prophet Elisha sweetened the waters. It is worthy of remark, that Josephus mentions a plentiful spring, whose streams made the fruits of the earth and of the trees to decay, and was also injurious to health; but being cured by Elisha, they were rendered as useful as they had been formerly deleterious. Elisha goes to Jericho to remain in the school of the prophets till he receives the commands of the Lord. God's servants are they who wait to know and to do his will. He is soon recognized as the successor of Elijah. What they could not ask of the one prophet, for they feared him, they had no difficulty in asking of the other. Here the milder and more attractive radiance of Elisha shines forth. The deputation that waited upon him from the city represent in few words its true condition —the situation as pleasant, but the ground as barren, and the waters as bad. Yet what could possibly be worse? The most common of all God's mercies is water, and often the most despised. Still, what is a town or city, without it, but a scene of discomfort, disease, and death? The fertility of the soil depends largely on the quantity and quality of water; whilst most assuredly it is heaven's gift to man, both for his happiness and health. Would that men knew better its value, and saw God's hand more in its bestowment!

The request of the deputation from Jericho to Elisha was the voice of humanity—a voice which no prophet of the Lord ever heedlessly disregarded. "Bring me," says he, "a new cruse, and put salt therein." It was

fetched. Observe, the "cruse" must be "new," and filled with salt. Away the prophet hastens towards the waters; nor does he tarry till he reaches the fountain. Not in the running stream, but in the spring, does he cast the salt. And taking no honour to himself, as a mere instrument, however much others contemplated his work with gratitude, he gives all the glory to God, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day." What a change must have been produced by this one act of mercy! No day could pass without a remembrance of the prophet, and no reaping season could return without a recurrence to his miraculous interference.

But what a lesson of life does the miracle exhibit! It is salt which is used to heal the waters. The gospel is salt. By it men are kept from corruption and are purified. There is no other cure: and the salt must be cast into the spring. Had the prophet healed the waters only as they ran in their accustomed channels, the sweet would again have given place to those that were bitter, flowing from the unchanged fountain. But no; the spring itself must be healed. How often men resolve that their lives shall be reformed! Some sudden providence, some afflictive bereavement, some stirring sermon, brings about a temporary change. Old haunts are deserted; old habits are suspended; they seem new characters. Alas! it is soon to return to their former ways, the good gone, and their last state even worse than the first. And why is this? The reformation was merely outward—the heart was still the same; the waters of the stream were sweetened, but the fountain was still bitter. So is it with all external reformations. What is needed is a new heart, and then will quickly follow a new life. This is possessed alone in the "new way" of the gospel, in Jesus the Saviour, set forth by the "new cruse;" this is produced by the truth of the gospel,

typified by the "salt;" this is wrought by the Spirit of God, through the instrumentality of gospel means, shown in the prophet speaking in the Lord's name, accompanied by divine power; and this is evidenced in a complete and lasting change of life, from sin to holiness: even as the waters of Jericho were transformed from bitter to sweet, from engendering disease and barrenness to occasioning health and fertility!

Elisha had not long to tarry at Jericho. He must go and do the work of God in other parts. A lasting boon had he conferred on the city and the plain, with which to this day his name is associated and the well shown. A prophet's mission is not all mercy. There must be darkness as well as light, or light will cease to be valued. The very judgments of God are mercies, though men do not so understand them. The discipline of a school must be strict when that is required, and gentle and encouraging where timidity keeps from a healthful development. The world is God's college, and, like a wise father, he instructs his people by a smile or a frown, just as their condition demands. As the prophet proceeds to Mount Carmel, he passes through Bethel. Who can mention Bethel without a remembrance both of Jacob's vision and his God? Now, however, Jehovah is forgotten, and his altars deserted by its inhabitants. This was one of the cities dedicated to the worship of the golden calves, set up by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. No sooner was the prophet of the Lord recognized as he came near to the city, than he is assailed by a multitude of profane "young men," called in our translation "little children"—a designation often given to grown persons who exhibit childish folly. They came forth and mocked him. "Go up, thou bald head! go up, thou bald head!" was their iniquitous cry. The phrase "go up" had an obvious reference to Elijah's translation, and implied their detestation of his successor, and their

desire that, like him, he might betake himself from the earth; and the epithet "bald head" was most insulting, as referring to that description of baldness produced by leprosy, and esteemed in the East most ignominious. The indignant prophet considered their conduct as showing how the inhabitants of the city preferred their false gods and false prophets to the God of Israel and his servants, and resented it. They must be punished, that their parents and relatives, with the whole city, may be made to fear. He "turned round and cursed them in the name of the Lord." The wicked are caught in their own wickedness: and immediately "two she-bears came forth out of the woods, and tare forty-and-two of them"—"tare" them, meaning, as the original word implies, "grievously lacerating and wounding them;" thus teaching the people of Bethel, as Dr. Waterland remarks, "to train up their children, in future, to good manners and the fear of God; and, for the present, they might see how God detested scoffers and mockers, and what reverence he expected to be paid to his commissioned prophets."

It is a serious matter to have to do with the servants of the Most High. Commissioned by him to accomplish his work, he sends none a warfare on their own charges. He is both their shield and their sun, their protector and provider. Nothing can be more ruinous than the course which some parents pursue before their children. They have scarcely a kind or generous word to utter concerning Christian ministers. They fill their minds full of prejudices, both against the Lord's servants and their work; and then wonder how they are not impressed and affected by the solemn verities to which, from time to time, they listen. This conduct is as destructive to the souls of the young, as the tearing of the bears was to the bodies of the "little children" of Bethel. It ought to be guarded against with all the holy jealousy which the love of heaven can

inspire, and with all the abhorrent dread which the fear of hell can create; whilst young people should ever remember this history—learning from it to respect age, to reverence truth, to honour the servants of the Most High, to learn from them, not to mock them; to follow them in their faith and piety; not to jeer at their infirmities, or pour contempt upon their kindness.

A striking change in the name, "Bethel," may here be noted. It was called by the Hebrews who adhered to the house of David and the worship of Jehovah, Bethaven; the former name meaning "the house of God," the latter "the house of iniquity." This arose from the idolatry of the inhabitants of Bethel. Onward, Elisha, from this Bethaven! Let the mothers weep; let the fathers talk and think; let the young mockers tremble, believe, and bow before Him whom prophets serve! This is not a place at which to tarry. Elisha must go on to Carmel. He hastens thither. Well can he meditate there. There his master conquered idolatry, and set it at naught before all the people. The scene and its associations strengthen faith, quicken spiritual life, cherish hope, and lead to renewed service. For a season, at Carmel the prophet rests.

THE WAR WITH MOAB, A POOR WIDOW, AND THE WOMAN OF SHUNEM.

It is now stirring times in Israel. Preparations are being made for war. The country, from one end to the other, is awakened before the summons of its king. The military spirit is by far the most easily aroused in fallen human nature—man's antagonism to man, his love of glory, his desire for conquest, and his lust for power, being passions always too freely nurtured in the bosom of our common depravity. Very fearful in every aspect is war; yet its concomitants of tinselled habiliments, gaudy equipages, martial music, and mighty feats of

prowess, have lent to it in all ages a terrible charm, moving the inmost soul of the young and daring, and rendering to the most reckless acts an appearance of lawful and honourable pre-eminence. Happy that day when men shall learn the art of war no more; but, alas! its dawn is still distant.

The occasion of this Israelitish war was a justifiable one, according to the common estimate in such matters. The king of Moab, from the days of David, had been tributary, paying annually a hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand rams, with the wool, to the kings of Israel. This they now refuse; and the soldiers of Israel "put on steel to recover their cloth." Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, unites in this campaign with the king of Israel, as did also the king of Edom, whose sovereignty at that time was subject to Judah. This alliance was natural, inasmuch as there now existed the most cordial friendship between Jehoshaphat and Jehoram, as well as from the Moabites having previously united with the Syrians against Judah. Israel, too, had partially reformed itself, under its present king, from idolatry; at least so as to render their case more hopeful, in the eyes of the good Jehoshaphat. The armies gather; they are to march through Edom, in order to encompass Moab; the kings are in the camp, homes and kindred are left behind, and quickly they reach the sterile desert.

Elisha, the year after he had gone to Mount Carmel, appears to have spent a portion of time in Samaria. Such a movement in the country, as that which was now occurring, was not likely to be overlooked by him. How it came to pass that he was at this period near to the army is not recorded; but where he is needed, there he was providentially found. How king Jehoshaphat could have led his army into the Desert of Edom without first consulting his God, is an oversight to be loudly condemned. Jehoram does not appear to regard the

guidance of Jehovah. It is the act of true piety, however, having neglected a duty, as speedily as possible to repair the evil. The whole army was now suffering fearful hardships from want of water. What could be done? Were the Moabites to come upon them in their present condition, they must be scattered and perish. What are the most skillful commanders, what the noblest equipments, what the most powerful batteries, if the numerous forces are paralyzed by cold or conquered by heat? Monarchs and their armies must be taught that "all the springs are in God." With parched lips and burning throats, the three kings confer together in the camp. Jehoram deplores their condition, but Jehoshaphat inquires for a prophet of the Lord: the one sighs in his misery, but the other asks in faith. Means which are despised in prosperity, are welcomed in the hour of adversity. The advice of the king of Judah is adopted, and a prophet is sought.

How numerous are the instances in which the people of God are instructed, that "man's extremity is God's opportunity!" Never did this more fully appear than on the present occasion. Inquiry is set on foot for a prophet. One of the attendants of Jehoram, unlike his master, who knew Elijah, who was also now acquainted with the dwelling of Elisha, and with the relation which the latter had borne to the former prophet, instantly replies, "Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." Well was he known to Jehoshaphat, and fully did he recognize as with him the Spirit of the Lord. The three kings go down to the humble prophet. How much is the possession of wisdom beyond the possession of wealth! Those three sovereigns place themselves at the feet of this lowly saint.

The presence of Jehoram is offensive to Elisha. The patron of sin ought never to receive any sanction to his wickedness from the minister of salvation. If the suf-

ferings of a sinner bring him for help to a believer, he must be told his state, as well as relieved from his wretchedness. The king of Israel pleads not with the prophet in his own name, but in the name of his allies, and especially in that of the king of Judah. Personally he is rebuked, and that with much fidelity; but his plea is admitted, and Elisha replies, "As the Lord of Hosts liveth, before whom I stand; surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." Plain and painful words are these for the ears of a king, and such as the mere courtiers, both of past ages and of the present, would shudder to address to those in power; but the prophets were faithful men, and cared more for the favour of God than for the strongest arm of flesh. Bold as was Elijah, not less so was his successor. But in the presence of Jehoram, the prophet's heart is troubled: the Spirit of the Lord has never dwelt with discord; if he is to be informed of the will of God, regarding that of which he was now consulted, his mind must be calmed, his spirit soothed, and his whole frame be reduced into a condition of patient waiting at the divine footstool.

We have elsewhere referred to the custom in the schools of the prophets, of cultivating music. Who has not felt the influence of melodious harmony in rendering the soul devotional? Elisha requires a minstrel; one is immediately brought. Wrapped in his mantle, abstracted from the gaze of kings or people, the prophet lends his soul to the sweet sounds now falling on his ear. He tarries not long before he receives a visit from his God; every eye fixed, the kings and their attendants anxiously awaiting the issue, quickly the prophet rises from his seat. The minstrel ceases; Elisha points to the surrounding valley, and commands, saying, "Make it full of ditches." No wind shall blow, no rain shall fall, yet that valley shall

be filled with water, that you may drink, both you and your cattle. Not only so, for this is a light matter with the Lord: your enemies shall fall by your hands; their fenced cities shall become a ruin; their wells of water shall be filled up; their defeat shall be complete. But this shall not be to-night. Water shall be given you to-morrow, at the time of the morning sacrifice. There is still a God in Israel to serve!

The exercise of faith in the Lord is the highest act, as well as the surest evidence, of true religion. Such confidence, in seasons of prosperity, is well pleasing; much more in times of trouble. And as the greater the trial, the stronger the faith—so is it all the more honouring to the Most High. Sovereigns and soldiers in the Desert of Edom, sorely suffering from thirst, must wait all the evening, all the night, till the Lord's appointed time. Elijah's prayer was answered, and his offering was burnt up, at the time of the evening sacrifice; Elisha's prophecy is accomplished, and the ditches are filled with water, at the time of the morning sacrifice. God has instituted services, and commanded them to be performed at appointed seasons. No great or good work can be done without order and regularity. When the people pray, then the refreshing waters of the sanctuary flow. So now, scarcely had the morning oblation been offered, before springs gush forth in the desert and fill up every open ditch; the people drink, the army is refreshed, the arm of the Lord is revealed, and the word of the prophet is fulfilled. Who amongst those thousands can ever again forget the power and mercy of Jehovah? And yet how soon our past sufferings cease to be remembered, when health is restored!

The enemies of the kings, meanwhile, were alive to their approach, and were preparing to meet them. The rising mists, occasioned by the burning rays of the sun falling upon these miraculous supplies of water, were

misunderstood by the scouts sent forth to reconnoitre the hosts of Israel and Judah. The streams in the ditches, through the haze, assume the appearance of pools of blood. The Moabites imagine that the allies had fallen out amongst themselves, and that in the dispute many had fallen. Now was the moment for them to strike. They press forward to the attack. Civil broils give just advantage to the common foe. Nothing can be worse than the falling out of friends, at the moment when the enemy of both pursues. Under this deception, the Moabites hurry forward, and furiously rush into the ranks of the united forces arrayed against them. When too late, they discover their mistake. The conflict is short—the slaughter is terrible. The hosts of Moab betake themselves to flight. They are followed; multitudes are slain; their cities are destroyed, their wells are filled up, their trees are felled, their lands are marred; desolation covers their borders. One remaining onslaught completes the campaign. The king of Moab, with seven hundred resolute followers, rushes against the Edomites. He is repulsed, with a disastrous loss; when, either from anger at his destiny, or willing by the most costly offering to appease his cruel gods, he sacrifices before all Israel, and by his own hand, his eldest son. What slaves men are who are led by blind superstition! There is no greater tyrant than the Prince of Darkness. Horrified at the sight, the men of Israel and Judah return to their own homes. Every word spoken by the prophet was fulfilled.

It has been truly said, that reality is far more affecting than fiction. The death of the son of the king of Moab as a sacrifice, shocked the stern soldiers more than the sight of all the heaps of slain who fell in battle. Descriptions of personal trials come more home to our hearts and sympathies than any of a merely general character. The tale of the individual is more thrilling

than the history of the million. Away from the war against the Moabites, Elisha now finds sorrow in the circle of the prophets. Those holy men were not too holy to be married or to enjoy family comforts. But one of their number had died, leaving a widow and two sons; and he had died in debt. During such reigns as that of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram, it is no matter of astonishment that both the priests and prophets of the Lord should be in difficulties; but they shall not be forsaken by their Master when deserted by the kings, his vicegerents. The widow, in her distress, comes to Elisha. Her husband's creditor threatens to seize her sons and sell them for slaves. The mother's heart is lacerated—the widow's soul is smitten; but "God is the husband of the widow and the father of the fatherless." All she had in her possession was "a pot of oil"—valuable to her in her poverty, but nothing to meet her necessities. The Lord would have no human being a slave, and no servant of his an unnecessary sufferer. The prophet shall relieve and enrich the widow. "She must be a debtor for more," as Bishop Hall remarks, "that her debts may become less." She must borrow from all her neighbours, to pay all her creditors. She must borrow the vessels—God multiplies the oil. A large number are lent her; the oil is poured out, and there is more than enough to fill them all. She sells the oil, pays the debt, saves her sons from slavery, and has a goodly allowance left behind.

Spectacle after spectacle of domestic trial and triumph, engrossing our most tender affections, fill up the mission of Elisha. Travelling from one part to another, doing and making known the Lord's will, "it fell on a day" that he entered Shunem. In this city of Issachar there dwelt a lady, who is described as a "great (or wealthy) woman." As the prophet passed her house, she constrained him to come in and share her hospitality. This was the beginning of their friendship; it became

intimate, insomuch that "as oft as he passed by he turned in thither to eat bread." It was after one of these occasions, that this kind-hearted Shunamite, affected by the excellence of the prophet, proposed to her husband to erect on the wall "a prophet's chamber," and to furnish it, so that whenever Elisha came that way he might have a home. The husband readily complies, and often did "the man of God" find in that lowly room a resting-place for his weary feet in the days of his pious pilgrimage. Never yet has kindness shown to the servants of the Most High gone unrewarded. There is one who forgets not "the cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple." Nor did "the woman of Shunem" lose her reward. Grateful for great attention, on one occasion Elisha sends his servant Gehazi to inquire of her what he could do for her. Her reply bespeaks her character. "She lived," she said, "among her own people"—intimating that she had what she wished, and was satisfied with what she had. Gehazi reminded his master that she was childless. The hint was taken: the Shunamitish woman was called; she is informed that she will have a child; and in due time she became the happy mother of a son.

How often it happens, that our most precious mercies become the sources of our sorest trials! Children are both great comforts and great cares. What anxiety encircles their infancy, what watchfulness their childhood, what concern their increasing years! and when they reach maturity, to possess evidences of their piety, and to see them respectably situated in life, many a prayerful season and sleepless hour register the extent of parental regard and the weight of parental responsibility. But the guardianship required in childhood is nothing to that attaching to later years. The woman of Shunem found this with her son. As yet he had caused her little trouble. But "when he was grown," having gone into the fields where his father's reapers

were engaged, he was seized with illness, so that he was obliged to cry out, "My head, my head!" He was carried home—but it was to die. Whither, oh, whither shall the afflicted mother betake herself in her sorrow—whither, but to "the man of God?" To him she hastens. She is seen by him, whilst yet distant. He sends Gehazi to inquire the occasion of her visit, and whether all was well. Knowing that whatever happens under God must be right, she answers, "It is well." Next moment she is at the prophet's feet, tells him her trial, and prays him to return with her; nor will she leave him to come by himself. Her importunity prevails; they proceed together, and, behold! the child is dead. The prophet enters his chamber, where lay the youth, calls upon his God, stretches himself upon the child, and restores him to life. Immediately the anxious mother is summoned, her son is given to her, and, after an outburst of maternal gratitude, uttered at Elisha's feet, she arose and retired.

What a work was that in which those luminaries of the world, in the early days of its history, were so constantly engaged! True, they had fearful judgments to announce, painful seasons to anticipate; but their mission was not all concerning "wrath to come." They brought joy to many a sorrowful bosom, light into many a dark dwelling. They went about continually doing good. Witness Elisha. To enter Jericho and receive the blessings of its grateful inhabitants; to visit the prophet's widow, and to find her happy with her sons; to mingle songs of praise with those of the woman of Shunem, on his frequent visits to "the prophet's chamber," over her "son who was lost and is found:" these, as viewed simply in themselves, were events sufficient to cheer a lifetime of toil and care. But when they are regarded as evidences of a higher call and holier work, they assume an aspect of unspeakable moment. They proclaim to all the divine mission to which Elisha

was appointed; so also did his service on behalf of the armies of Judah, Edom, and Israel. From one end of it to the other, the land must have rung with the report of the prophet's doings—a glorious testimony to the presence of the prophet's God. This is the consummation of the loftiest aspirations of every true minister of the Most High. Let there be multiplied instances of usefulness; but let all redound to the divine glory. Let the people be warned and taught, encouraged and kept in the right way; amidst judgments and blessings God must be all in all.

ELISHA AT GILGAL; DEATH IN THE POT; NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN; THE LOST HATCHET.

Elisha appears to have visited in rotation, or as occasion required, the schools of the prophets in different localities. Four years having elapsed, we now find him at Gilgal; it was during a season of great dearth. The sons of the prophets suffered in common with the rest of the inhabitants. Gehazi is required to prepare for them their simple meal of herbs. It happened that "one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds, his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage, for they knew them not." This "wild vine" was the colocynth, so called from the shape of its leaves and the climbing nature of its stems; it is remarkable for its bitter taste and violent purgative qualities, being a strong poison if it is taken in large quantities and unqualified by any other mixture. It was at once discovered, when tasted, that there was some disagreeable and deleterious ingredient in the broth; and with one accord the sons of the prophets, looking to Elisha, exclaimed, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!" The prophet hesitates not for a moment; what he knew not by learning, he receives by revelation; it is mixed

with meal, the bitter is assuaged, the poison is counteracted, and the evil is cured. But the painful season of want continued. In this extremity God moves the heart of a man of Baalshalisha, who brings of the first-fruits to the prophet, a most welcome gift, "twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk." Here we have a collateral evidence (as indeed we have in other parts of Scripture) to the fact that the majority of those who resided in these schools of Israel and Judah belonged to the tribe of Levi, and were therefore largely sustained by the free-will offerings of the people. But what were a few loaves and a few ears of corn to feed so many? He who yearly multiplies the handful of seed and sends the harvest, can also increase abundantly this supply. Nor was this blessing withheld in this season of trial. They are placed before the people. God's promise to his servant is fulfilled, and "they ate and left thereof." How securely may the faith of the Lord's people rest on the promise, "Thy bread shall be certain, and thy water shall be sure!"

Of all the circumstances, both for interest and instructiveness, which occurred in connection with the eventful life of Elisha, that of the healing of Naaman, the illustrious Syrian, is the most remarkable. War had been waged from time to time between Syria and Israel. Of the numerous staff of officers who led the Syrian forces, by far the most distinguished was Naaman. Indeed, he was the great captain of the age. "But he was a leper." Amongst the prisoners which had been taken in war by the Assyrian army, there was "a little Hebrew maid." As God would have it, this little slave was appointed to wait upon Naaman's wife. She was a child of tender affection, loving her country, and rejoicing in its distinctions; but at the same time feeling for the sufferings of others. She beheld with pain the leprosy of her master, the sorrow which it occasioned, and desired to see him cured. Even the youngest per-

sons, right-minded towards God, his cause and his glory, are not without opportunities of usefulness. This little Hebrew captive, carried into Syria, becomes a missionary of mercy in a strange land; she tells her mistress of the wonders wrought by Elisha, the prophet of Israel, and entreats that her master may visit him and be healed. Ofttimes had rumours reached far into neighbouring countries of the amazing doings of Israel's prophets. Naaman is informed of what Elisha can accomplish. What will he not do, or dare, to be freed from his affliction? He receives letters from the king of Syria to the king of Israel, requiring that his great captain and councillor should be "cured by him of his leprosy." The king feared that he only sought an occasion of war with him: most likely, however, the meaning is, that he either could himself, as king, work the greatest wonders in his land; or at least, that he could command those who possessed the power of performing them. Smitten with fear in his difficulty, he rent his clothes. In the midst of his troubles Elisha sends to him. Never had messenger been more welcome to his court, or message been more soothing to his spirit. "Let him come now to me," says Elisha, "and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

Gorgeous was the apparel which covered this leper, and great the retinue which attended upon his footsteps, as he hastened to the lowly dwelling of "the man of God." But what were wealth, and rank, and fame, to Naaman? His skin was loathsome; his disease was painful; yet his spirit was proud, and he must be humbled. Elisha does not even deign to come forth to meet him; he sends his servant with the message, that if he will go and wash seven times in the waters of the Jordan, his leprosy will depart. He is offended with the simplicity of the cure, for he expected that something consistent with his rank and gratifying to his pride must accompany it. "What," he asks, "are

the waters of the Jordan any more than the waters of the rivers of my own country, Abana and Pharpar, that I should wash in them? Why seven times, in order to receive this boon? I had thought that the prophet would have come out to me, called on his God, smitten the place, and caused the disease to depart." So he turned away in a rage. Happily for him, on this occasion his servants were wiser than he. They come near and say, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?" Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan; and "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

How the simple means and missionary efforts of "the little Hebrew maid" affect this noble Syrian captain! All Syria must have heard of the fame of Elisha, and the glory of the God of Israel; and a whole land is taught concerning the Most High through a little slave. Naaman now acknowledged the Lord alone. His previous objections, indeed, are the objections of our common nature to the divine cure for the leprosy of sin. To be saved, he would do something, and it must be something of renown. "Only believe, and be saved;" the means are too simple, the command too humbling. And then only in the way, the one way, of the cross? Why not our own mode of repentance, our own method of reformation? The answer in both cases is the same: if we are to be saved at all, it must be in the way of God's appointment. And happy it is for us when we are brought to a knowledge of this essential truth; for, next to the enjoyment of redemption itself, is the possession of an acquaintance with the way of its attainment.

The gratitude of Naaman, when he was healed, overflows, both in adoration of Jehovah and in thanksgivings to Elisha. The great first cause is honoured,

the instrument is not forgotten. Never, indeed, is this the case by a truly sanctified heart. Noble gifts are offered to the prophet, but he refuses them all, lest either his God or his country should lose the honour connected with the cure of this renowned stranger. But a rapacious eye had fallen upon the glittering wealth of the Syrian, and a covetous heart longed to possess it. This idolater (for "covetousness is idolatry") was Gehazi. Seeing his master had accepted of no reward at Naaman's hands, when he had departed with his followers, he ran after him. It was to ask him, in Elisha's name, for a gift—"a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." One sin is sure to lead to another. Lying is the immediate companion of an improper attachment to wealth. He tells Naaman that two young men, sons of the prophets, had come to Elisha in need. The thankful Syrian gives him two talents instead of one, and also the raiment. Gehazi returns as if nothing had occurred, and stands before his master to serve him; to the prophet all had been revealed. "Be sure your sin will find you out." Gehazi adds transgression to transgression. When asked where he had been, he denies that he had been anywhere. And then to take from the stranger what Elisha had refused! Never was the retributive justice of the Almighty more marked and manifest than in this case. At the word of the prophet, Naaman's leprosy fell upon Gehazi, "to abide with him and his for ever;" and he went forth from the prophet "white as snow." An awful lesson to all ages and characters, against the sin of covetousness!

Our attention must now be drawn to an interesting incident, strikingly indicative of Elisha's regard to justice as well as generosity. The dwellings of the prophets were "too strait for them," and they wished to enlarge them towards the Jordan. Engaged in cutting down wood for the purpose, one of their number let

fall an axe into the water; the sorrow of the man's heart, however, was not simply because of the loss he had sustained, but because the axe was borrowed. The prophet highly appreciated his feelings; and, casting a piece of wood into the water where the hatchet had fallen, the iron swam and rose to the surface, so that it was restored to him again. How often, in small matters as much as in more important affairs, both the presence and interference of God, as well as the upright character of his servants, are made manifest! Referring to the swimming of iron, a curious prediction is mentioned by Dr. Gutzlaff, the late eminent Chinese Missionary, as having been handed down for ages amongst the inhabitants of Siam and China—"That when iron swims, there will come from the West towards the East a religion which shall destroy all others, and establish itself for ever." And when iron steamboats were first seen in the Chinese seas, the people on the shore shouted, "The time has come! iron swims! the religion of the West must conquer." God, in his inscrutable providence, appears now to be fulfilling this tradition. All China, so long sealed up from intercourse with other lands, is being thrown open. His truth is being professed by multitudes; idolatry is shaken to its centre; and events seem to encourage the hope that this nation, consisting of more than three hundred and sixty-seven millions of human beings, will be "born in a day." May the fervent prayers of the churches, for this consummation, be answered, and their best hopes be realized!

THE GREAT FAMINE; ELISHA'S DEATH—HIS ASHES, AND HIS EXCELLENCE.

Nothing is so remarkable to a careful reader of the times of the prophets, as the disregard which was shown both to the wonderful doings of God and to his servants,

alike by king and subjects. No time was allowed to elapse without the people being taught that the Lord was God in Israel; and yet so great was the attachment of the tribes to their froward courses, that they were continually returning to idolatry. Many were the severe afflictions which their rebellion cost them, but they seemed willing to suffer for the sake of sin. No wonder that at last they were forsaken and scattered.

As the life of Elisha draws near its close, several circumstances of deep interest invite attention. Naaman had not long returned to his country before war broke out between Israel and Syria. During the struggle, the king of the latter country was sorely perplexed, having been thwarted in all his designs. The king of Israel was made acquainted with his most secret purposes. The Syrian monarch imagined that there must be treachery in his council, and demanded that all who were attached to the interests of his enemy should immediately confess. At once the reply was, "None, my lord, O king! but Elisha the prophet, that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber." The fame of Elisha had doubtless spread far and wide, through his miraculous cure of Naaman; and indeed it was he who had informed Jehoram of the movements and purposes of the Syrians, by a knowledge of which they were outwitted and overcome. The rage of Benhadad, the king of Syria, against Elisha, knew no bounds. He determined to seize him; and hearing that he was at Dothan, a town in the tribe of Manasseh, he sent a strong force to take him prisoner and bring him to Damascus. The town was surrounded by night; and when the prophet's servant awoke, early in the morning, and saw their condition, in despair he cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Undaunted in spirit, unshaken in confidence, Elisha replied, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." The eyes of the servant were

opened; and, "behold! the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." The Syrians were smitten with blindness, and were unconsciously led by the prophet to Samaria. Jehoram was inclined to put them all to death; but the prophet whom they came to injure was he who generously saved them alive, caused them to be hospitably treated, and in peace sent back to their master.

More fearful than war, more destructive than pestilence, is famine. This is shown in the death-records of many a land, and in the thrilling annals of many a city. But to be afflicted by all three—war, famine, and pestilence! Indeed, pestilence and famine generally journey together. Samaria was now suffering from a long and heart-rending siege; Israel, from a seven years' famine; and to such a condition had Samaria been reduced, that "an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver." Nay; contrary to every feeling of nature, and compelled by the frightful cravings of hunger, a woman had killed and eaten of her own child. This fact reaching the king's ears, it clothed him with sackcloth, and filled him with sadness; and because Elisha had not interceded with God for the city, and rescued it from the power of the Syrians, he threatened his life. But the power of Jehovah was no sooner desired than it was displayed. During the night, the Syrians were made to hear a sound as of a mighty army; they imagined that the Hittites and Egyptians had come up against them, and in affright they fled, leaving behind them their tents and all their stores. Four wretched lepers, who sat by the gates of the city ready to die, and who determined to place themselves in the hands of the Syrians, went to their tents, and finding them empty, communicated the joyful tidings to the Samaritans. Sorrow gave place to joy, hunger to a rich repast; the prophet was not only spared, but honoured, and the hand of the Lord was recognized in the deliverance.

"Use hospitality," is the short but comprehensive law of Christian neighbourhood, enjoined upon his followers by their Lord. So, at least, he inspired his distinguished apostle, Paul, to inculcate. In the fulfillment of this precept, men have "entertained angels unawares." An angel of mercy to the woman of Shunem was Elisha, to whom she had shown no little kindness. When the seven years' famine commenced, he recommended her to take up her abode with her son amongst the Philistines. She was thus saved from many hardships; but one result was, that during her absence her property was confiscated. His name, even here, stands in good stead. On her return, and discovering her property in the hands of others, she went to make her appeal to the king. Happily for her, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, was then talking with Jehoram. He had been telling him of all the mighty works which his master had done, and "how he had restored a dead body to life." As they conversed, she drew nigh. Gehazi introduced her to the king, as the Shunamite whose son Elisha had revived. She made known her circumstances; the king inquired into her history, and ordered that "all that was hers, and all the fruit of the field since the day that she had left the land even until now," be returned to her and her family.

He who could not be taken to Damascus by force, went thither of his own accord. Benhadad, his former enemy, was sick; and when the king heard of his arrival, he sent Hazael with a rich present of every good thing of Damascus, even forty camels' burden, to give to the prophet. He inquired concerning his master's illness. Elisha replied, that he might recover, but that he would surely die. He fixed his eyes steadfastly on Hazael, till he wept. He asked the cause. The prophet, foreseeing that he was to reign over Syria and become a fearful enemy of Israel, informed Hazael of what he should do. Indignant, he replied, "Is thy servant a dog, that he

should do this great thing?" But, as Mr. Jay once remarked, "the dog did it." Next day Hazael took the life of Benhadad, and reigned in his stead; and, as Elisha had foretold, carried dreadful havoc into the towns and cities of Israel.

At the command of Elisha, Jehu was anointed king of Israel, by one of the sons of the prophets. Jehoram had been gathered to his fathers; and Joram also, his brother, was slain. Alas! Elisha himself "fell sick of the sickness whereof he died." He was visited in his illness by Joash, who was then king. Over him Joash wept, and cried—"O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" The phrase, it will be remembered, was that used by Elisha on the occasion of the translation of Elijah, and which had now passed into a proverb, expressive of consolation in sickness and encouragement in difficulties. Soon afterwards the prophet died; and we are assured by Josephus that with much sorrow and lamentation he was honourably interred. Some time after his death a very memorable circumstance occurred. It is thus narrated: "And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold! they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet."

"This miracle," as Dr. Hales well observes, "was the immediate work of God, and concurred with the translation of Elijah to keep alive in a degenerate age the grand truth of a bodily resurrection, which the translation of Enoch was calculated to produce on the antediluvian world, and which the resurrection of Christ in a glorified body fully illustrated." Or, in the language of Calmet, "This great miracle is the symbol and prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; there

being this important difference—that Elisha raised a dead body without raising himself, while Jesus Christ not only raised himself, but gives life to all who believe in him." "After his death," says the son of Sirach, "his body prophesied; he did wonders in his life, and at his death his works were marvellous."

With what satisfaction is the review of such a life as that of Elisha accompanied! His moral character bears the nearest inspection, and shines forth without a flaw. His powers, as delineated by the pen of inspiration, were nobly exercised; his time continually occupied; and his life a long discourse, both in words, and in actions of benevolence and charity. Truly he possessed his master's spirit in a double portion. His heart was tenderness; his speech fidelity, whether as used to kings or menials; his death, like his life, bespake the service of his Lord; "even in his ashes lived their wonted fires."

Repose, Elisha! Carefully the earth keeps thy hallowed remains. Repose with thy brethren, holy men of old, inspired of God. Surely the world which contains the dust of those so dear to him, cannot be doomed to complete destruction. No; the fires shall purify, but not annihilate; the elements shall melt, but it is that they may be remoulded; and out of the universal conflagration will come forth "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"—the abode of the Good Shepherd and his flock!

ISAIAH,

THE EVANGELICAL PROPHET.

THE CHARACTER OF THE TIMES, AND THE APPEARING OF THE PROPHET.

NATIONS have their night seasons—periods in their history when darkness gathers around their path, when prosperity departs from their borders, when the people grow weary in well-doing, when all around becomes shrouded in gloom, and when, in mercy, communities, even as individuals, are chastened by the Lord, in order that they may learn that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Even the churches of the living God have their winter as well as their summer seasons—eras in their experience when all around seems to wither and decay, when the atmosphere becomes cold or stormy, when all is dreary and desolate, and when, to all appearance, nothing but death reigns. In this world, indeed, there is a "tide in the affairs of men," both of kings and subjects, the rich and the poor, in Christian communities and empires—a spring tide and a neap tide—times when the waters flow in abundance, and the winds are as favourable as the waves—and periods when they have receded, leaving nothing behind them but slime or sand. But the night does not always last, the winter does not always continue, the tide does not always retreat.

It was now a night season in the history of God's chosen people. Long had he taught them, both by mercy and judgment, by prosperity and adversity; yet

they rebelled against him, turning aside to idolatry, and despising his power and providence who had brought them out of bondage, given them a land of plenty, and afforded them ample means both of knowing and serving him; having revealed his laws, appointed his worship, instituted a priesthood, and commissioned his prophets to encourage, admonish, and instruct them. "Unto whom much is given, of them much shall be required." Many were the privileges distinguishing the Jews; yet, with all, they dishonoured the name of Jehovah, and followed after other gods. Even divine mercy in this world has a limit. "They that sow to the wind shall reap the whirlwind." Hosea and Amos had both announced the displeasure of the Most High; Jonah, too, had preached repentance; and now another, and by far the most illustrious of Judah's prophets, came forth to proclaim the judgments of God, the approach of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, the destruction of their city and temple, and the gathering storm of desolation which was to sweep across the whole land. This prophet was Isaiah, or Esaias, the son of Amoz, by some believed to have been of royal descent, but by all admitted to be one of the most poetical and sublime, as well as evangelical, of the prophets of the Lord.

The period of Isaiah's labours has been variously defined. Some think that it stretched from the time of Uzziah to that of Manasseh; including a year of the reign of Uzziah, the whole of the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, and part of that of Manasseh; and that by this latter king he was martyred, having been cruelly sawn asunder. This would make the epoch in which he prophesied—even supposing he began in the closing year of the reign of the first-mentioned monarch, and continued only to the commencement of the reign of the last of them—to be an epoch of more than sixty years. We are not inclined,

however, to adopt this opinion. The tradition mentioned by Jewish writers, and by far the most likely to be true, is, that he died during the fifteenth or sixteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah, which reduces the length of time in which he filled the prophetical office to about forty-eight years. A long ministry, even then; and such a ministry! His name is perhaps the most descriptive designation both of the man and the prophet—"Isaiah," signifying "the salvation of Jehovah." He was himself a lovely monument of redeeming mercy, a noble champion on its behalf, an honoured instrument in its diffusion, the sublimest seer of its future glory, and the most rapturous enunciator of Zion's future King. Bishop Lowth styles him "the prince of prophets," and compares him with Homer; the Jewish rabbies call him "the great prophet;" Eusebius entitles him "the greatest of the prophets;" Jerome speaks of him as an "evangelist;" Grotius designates him "the Demosthenes of the Hebrews;" and the fathers refer to him as to "an apostle," and especially to his being "the evangelical prophet."

Besides the prophecies of Isaiah, other books have borne his name. One is referred to in 2 Chronicles xxvi. 22, in these words: "Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write." This, with other writings of various of the prophets, not being inspired productions, and therefore never having been received into the canon of Scripture, has been entirely lost. There are also two apocryphal volumes ascribed to his pen—the one "the Ascension," and the other "the Apocalypse of Isaiah." Both, however, have been condemned as forgeries, and the latter has long since perished. Our attention must be concentrated on his prophecies—that gigantic production of truth, inspiration, genius, and grace, the very possession of which exalts the world in which it exists, ennobles the race to which it belongs, and becomes to

all generations a perennial source of "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness."

ISAIAH THE PROPHET, AND UZZIAH THE KING.

The prophecies of Isaiah are a series of oracles. The subjects of them differ, according to the necessities of the occasion, the object which the Spirit of inspiration had in view in their announcement, and the requirements of the Church and of the world. At one time, divine wrath is proclaimed against the sins of God's people—at another, mercy and prosperity; now the surrounding nations are admonished and denounced; and again, the coming of the hope of all nations is foretold. All are enunciated in language the most select and striking, often in strains of the most beautiful poetry; sometimes peculiarly descriptive, at other times hortatory and compassionate, again severe and sublime, then hopeful and gladsome; but always in a form worthy of the great and burning spirit of the most illustrious poet, the most evangelical divine, and the most renowned of Hebrew prophets.

The apportioning of his remarkable book, in every case arbitrary, has of course been varied. It contains in all sixty-six chapters, and has been thus classified. The first division is supposed to include the first five chapters; the second, the seven succeeding ones; the third reaches from the thirteenth to the twenty-second, inclusive; the fourth extends from the twenty-eighth to the thirty-fifth; the thirty-sixth and two following chapters contain the fifth; and the sixth reaches from the thirty-ninth to the end of the book. Some commentators name their divisions according to the character of the prophecies. Thus, those which contain denunciations of the divine vengeance intermixed with gospel promises, they call evangelico-legal; the narrative parts, historical; and the prophecies and promises

regarding the deliverance of the Jews from Babylonish captivity, or the world from the bondage of sin, through Messiah, evangelical. Others characterize those prophecies which present severe reproofs and sore judgments, mingled with promises to the penitent, as reprehensory; those directed against the enemies of the Jews and of their Church, as minatory; others, as narrative or historical; and others, which concern Messiah, his coming, and his cause, as consolatory. We propose, in our remarks, following the more obviously natural course of referring to his predictions as they were given under the reigns of the different kings during whose lifetime he prophesied, and in connection with the circumstances in which, in the providence of God, they were called forth.

Uzziah was the first monarch under whose reign Isaiah prophesied. He was the son and immediate successor of Amaziah, king of Judah. He began his reign in his sixteenth year, about eight hundred and ten years before the coming of Christ. The commencement of his sovereignty was auspicious, for "he sought God in those days; and as long as he sought the Lord, he made him to prosper." He took Elath, Gath, Jabesh, and Ashdod, gaining many victories over the Philistines. He defeated the Arabs of Gurbaal, the Mehunim, and the Ammonites. His army consisted of more than three hundred thousand men. He restored the old fortifications of the country and built other new ones, providing them with suitable garrisons and ample stores. But though a man of war, he did not altogether neglect the cultivation of the arts of peace. He greatly advanced the interests of agriculture, improving the breed of cattle and the growth of pasturage. For the most part, he was himself a strict follower of the law, though he sinned in not destroying the altars of idolatry. A striking instance, indeed, is mentioned of Uzziah's disobedience to the Mosaic

commands, and of God's punishment of him on account of his rebellion. He attempted to usurp, on one occasion, the office of the priesthood, and in the very act he was smitten with leprosy; so jealous has Jehovah ever been of the purity of his altar and service! From this time to the close of his days, he was compelled to live the life of a recluse, in a dwelling-house by himself. The affairs of his kingdom were administered by his son and successor, Jotham. He died in his fifty-second year, and was interred in a sepulchre "in the field of the burial-ground which belonged to the kings," it being unlawful to defile the royal sepulchres with a leprosed body. It has been observed, as a matter of historical recollection and interest, that the famous era of the Olympiads commenced in the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Uzziah.

During the lifetime of this king of Judah, Isaiah gave utterance to the predictions, warnings, and instructions contained in the first five chapters of his prophecies. The first chapter stands unconnected, and is complete in itself. The first verse is the prophet's announcement of himself and of his commission. In this prophecy, in language the most pathetic, he laments the rebellion of the ancient people of God, for whom he had done so much, and describes them as less mindful of their Lord than the lower animals are of their masters: "For the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." He depicts their tendency to idolatry, their want of piety, their common corruption; he shows this to be all but the universal condition of both rulers and people; and in the most striking form calls upon the heavens to listen and the earth to hear, as he recounts such awful enormities perpetrated by those whom he had nourished and brought up as children. Then follows the denunciation of judgments. Whether these had reference to

what was to take place during the days of Ahaz, by the invasions of Resin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, cannot well be determined. Most likely, however, they did; as during their encroachments the country was desolated, cities were burnt with fire, the land was seized before the eyes of its owners by strangers, and the place of God's people became limited as "a cottage in a garden." Yet it was not all to be blackness. There still remained a remnant. The command is to repent; and then God would restore to them prosperity, though it might be by passing through a dark night into a bright day.

The first five verses of the second chapter present us with a glowing and glorious picture of the preaching of the gospel to all lands, the coming in of the nations to the Church of Christ, the state of peace which such a result was to inaugurate, and the age of the worship of God as the reign of salvation. All classes of critics have agreed in considering the prophecy as having reference to the millennium. Most appropriately does Isaiah thus early unfold cheering views and happy expectations to the Church. Dark and portentous announcements were speedily to come; but without despair—yea, with a sweet measure of hope—he would prepare to meet them. It was "the last days" of which he had to speak. During these, as one mountain rises higher than another, yea, overtops all the others around it, so the Church of God, "the mountain of the Lord's house," is to be exalted above the hills. It is to become the most prominent beacon light, as it is the only true light, in the world, for the salvation of men and the conduct of nations. To it all lands are to look; by it all are to be taught; from it is to go forth the law: its Prince of Peace is to possess all empire; under him the destructive spear is to become a pruning-hook, and the death-bearing sword a ploughshare; the arts of war are to cease being taught; and the strife of nations is to

become the service of mercy and the cultivation of holiness. Such is the outline of the glorious era portrayed by Isaiah centuries before the advent of the Saviour, and which still remains to be fulfilled. Yet as surely do we believe that it will be realized, as that we know He came whom, ages before, in anticipation of his mission, Hannah had styled "The Messiah."

Immediately upon this soul-inspiring announcement of the salvation of the nations, follows a prophecy of punishment. It has been questioned, indeed, whether any of this part of the first section was recorded during the reign of Uzziah. We are inclined nevertheless to the belief, that the whole of it was recorded during his lifetime—partly whilst he yet reigned, and partly whilst Jotham acted as his regent. From the sixth verse to the close of the second chapter, judgment is proclaimed against the unbelieving Jews; and that because of their continued regard to the false gods and immoral practices of the nations, their confidence in themselves, and their distrust of Jehovah. On this account, his wrath was to be kindled against them, and his vengeance was to fall upon their hills and mountains, upon their lofty cedars and high towers, their cities and shipping, till all should discover their iniquity and destroy their idols. Then, according to his manner, the prophet, passing from the particular case of "the chosen people," considers the general condition of the nations, sunk in the sins which were to be punished in Judah; till, borne on the spirit of the far future, he beholds all empires rent and shaken, casting their false deities to "the moles and to the bats," and fearing the true God. The whole of the third chapter is a prophecy of the destruction of Judea, to be wrought by the Babylonians in the first instance, but having reference also to the complete desolation and dispersion which was to follow the siege of Jerusalem and its ruin by the Romans, with a special allusion to the distress of the haughty and high-minded

daughters of Zion. The fourth chapter is an indication of the return of divine favour, the restoration of God's mercy; the re-establishment of the glory of Zion, the washing away of all its iniquity, and a revival of all its defence and security: by some supposed to refer exclusively to the return and rebuilding of Jerusalem after the captivity; by others, to the spiritual temple, the refuge revealed in the gospel, and the security of all who put their trust in Jesus; and by others, to the return of the Jews to their own land, and their restoration in the last times.

The last, the fifth chapter in this first division—like the first chapter of all, is independent and perfect in itself. It has regard also to the same subject. By the striking simile of a vineyard, planted on a pleasant hill, cultivated with the utmost care, fenced in and stocked with the choicest vines, having a watchtower in its midst for protection, and a winepress for the preparation of its produce—all having been done for it which experience and wisdom could accomplish—fruit looked for and expected, but nothing but barrenness the result—are the people of Israel presented, and their conduct to their Maker and Owner set forth. And now the inquiry is made, what ought to be done to such a vineyard? the reply to which is, lay low its hedges, and leave it a prey to the beasts of the field; no more regarding it, but letting it grow waste, without water and without labour. Thus are the judgments of God against his people repeated, their rejection proclaimed, the invasion of their enemies described, their captivity foretold, and woe against all classes denounced. And, ah, what wretchedness is thus presented as following this fearful fall from the divine favour! "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound; yea, blessed are the people whose God is the Lord."

THE PREDICTIONS OF THE PROPHET DURING THE REIGNS OF JOTHAM AND AHAZ.

Already Jotham is known to us as Uzziah's son and substitute. We are now to contemplate his character, as his successor to the throne of Judah. For the long period of twenty-five years he governed the kingdom for his father, and reigned as king himself sixteen years. He was thus the supreme head of the nation more than forty years. He was in many respects a good king and a successful ruler; yet, like his father, he allowed "the high places" of idolatry to continue, leaving in the land a temptation to the people to forsake their God. He built the great gate of the Temple, and raised fortifications on the walls of Jerusalem, and in the woods and mountains of Judah. The Ammonites, who during the days of his father had been subdued, again rebelled, whom he conquered and rendered tributary to his kingdom. Nevertheless, near the close of his reign, considerable confusion occurred, and the sceptre was handed to his son and successor, Ahaz, amidst the noise and disorder of invasion.

Of all the sovereigns of Judah, none was either more profligate or corrupt than Ahaz. He commenced his reign in his twentieth year, and occupied the throne for a period of sixteen years. He respected neither Jehovah, his Temple, his law, nor his prophets. He lived under the bondage alone of his own depraved desires. He restored idolatry throughout the land; turned for a time the house of the Lord into a temple for idols; imitated the idolaters of the nations around; and "sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." He introduced the rites of the Syrians into the country, had altars erected after their fashion in "every corner" of Jerusalem, and even altered the Temple to accommodate it to the Syrian model—finally, shutting it up altogether. His cow-

ardice, too, was as remarkable as his idolatry. His allied foes, Resin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, repulsed his forces on several occasions, the former taking from him Elath, on the Gulf of Akiba, a place of considerable importance to the commerce of the Hebrews, which was conducted by the way of Jerusalem; and though he had been informed by the prophet that he might obtain deliverance from his enemies, nevertheless he entered into a most displeasing alliance with Pul, the king of Assyria, asking from him assistance. This was afforded, but the result of it was to render Judah tributary to Assyria; and in the days of the successor of Pul, Tiglath-pileser, Galilee and Gilead became his possessions. Not only so; but he so "distressed" Ahaz, and drove him to such extremities, that he was scarcely able, with all the riches of the Temple and of his chief men, as well as of the royal treasury, to purchase peace from him who had been called in for protection. The Edomites, too, rebelled during his reign, and the Philistines made incursions into the country. On the whole, most humbling in his days was the condition of Judah. Yet he was permitted to die in peace in Jerusalem, though he was not buried in the city, in the sepulchre of the kings, as a mark of the disapprobation of the chief men and of the people of his wicked reign.

The prophecies admitted to have been delivered during the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, are those found from the beginning of the sixth to the close of the fourteenth chapter. It is worthy of observation, how completely the sixth chapter assumes the appearance of the actual commencement of Isaiah's predictions. Indeed, many learned commentators take for granted that it is; and that thus a portion of his writings has been transposed. We do not, however, incline to this view; as the greater part, at least, of what precedes, was delivered during Uzziah's lifetime, whilst the pro-

phet declares this to have been given to him in the year of his death. But this is not now of much moment. We are more concerned to understand to what his revelations may, during this period, have especial reference; nor do we imagine that we are left long in doubt.

With Bishop Lowth, we are agreed in considering the vision with which the sixth chapter commences as a solemn dedication of Isaiah to a completely new series of prognostications, introducing them with great solemnity, and reflecting upon them great importance. The predictions themselves regard the dispensations of God towards his own people, and a declaration in general concerning the nations, the whole result of which appears to us to depend on the final restoration of Israel. The opening vision given to the prophet is one remarkably sublime and emphatic. He beholds Jehovah himself upon his throne, high and lifted up; he witnesses his attendants crowding his Temple; he sees the bright and shining inhabitants of the celestial world, in deepest humility, hiding their faces in his presence and waiting his supreme command; he hears them shouting and singing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts!" and as the vision has to do with this world, so is he told that "the whole earth is full of his glory." Feeling his own unworthiness and vileness, the prophet falls down and confesses his transgressions before the Lord. A messenger from heaven hastens towards him, takes from off the divine altar a burning coal, touches therewith his lips, and sends him forth to announce to the people of God—yea, to all people—the doings and determinings of the Most High. At once he obeys, and in this new mission engages.

Alas! Isaiah, in entering upon his enterprise, has dark tidings to unfold. Judah has hardened herself in her sin, and her iniquity still more and more has worked death. She is to hear, and yet not understand

—to see, and yet not perceive. Wasting is to desolate her borders, and destruction is to lay low her cities. Still there is to be a people saved—a holy seed—a vitality in the midst of corruption, even as there is a germ of resurrection life in the body of death. This closes the sixth chapter. The whole of the two following have immediate reference to the troubles of the land in the time of Ahaz. His fear of the kings of Israel and Syria is minutely described. He is told to cast aside his faint-heartedness, and to go forth and conquer them. He refuses. He is commanded to ask for a sign. Even this he disregards. Then the mind of the prophet, overleaping ages, and realizing the period when neither Israel nor Judah shall have a king, announces the birth of Christ: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel!" How minute; how definite; such as no false oracle ever thought of attempting! With this the prophet assuages his sorrow and chagrin at the conduct of Ahaz—the shame of his country, and its sore scourge.

The picture which follows this, to the end of the eighth chapter, is one of painful subjection, on account of infidelity. Assyria allies itself with Judah, only to oppress and lay it waste. The inhabitants are slain, their wealth is taken, and their fields remain uncultivated. Here we learn that the wife of Isaiah was a prophetess. She bears to him a son. He gives him a name, at the desire of the Lord, according to the spoliation now coming upon Judah—Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Even the child must prophesy concerning it, saying, "My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." The prophet's mind is full of this infliction; and yet he turns to the quarter whence alone help could come, and finds comfort in the Lord. He calls upon all to repent; and even if a

confederacy of all lands were formed against them, and all false prophets were consulted for its success, they who appealed to the law and the testimony, and put their trust in the Lord, should ever find him salvation and a sanctuary. At the commencement of chapter ninth, the prophet again seeks relief in another announcement of life, hope, and blessedness. "They that sit in darkness shall see a great light." Now follows that glorious prediction of the coming and kingdom of Messiah—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

The remaining part of the ninth chapter, and the first four verses of the tenth, contain a prediction solely addressed to Israel. It is in itself a complete poem, remarkable for the regularity of its arrangement and the perfection of its plan. It presents a tremendous denunciation of divine vengeance against them, for their pride, their hypocrisy, and their unbelief. The concluding portion of chapter tenth foretells the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, Israel smitten yet saved, and reasons of comfort arising out of this great deliverance. Once more we have Isaiah, aided by inspiration, rising above every temporal mercy, and through a present good recognizing "the unspeakable gift" of God to the world. The eleventh chapter informs us of the coming of Messiah, as "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and as a branch out of his roots," with a description of his wisdom and worth, his adaptation to the glorious work of redemption, and of the

day as coming to his kingdom when "nothing shall hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain; for the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea:" and when so blessed shall the result be of his reign, that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox:" and all this as connected with the ingathering of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles. Chapter twelfth is a psalm, more strikingly adapted to gospel times and Christian worship, than to that of any period in the history of the Jewish Church. Indeed, the Jewish writers continually refer it to the times of Messiah.

The thirteenth and fourteenth chapters are full of divine threatenings against the enemies of God's ancient people—the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the Philistines. From the beginning of the thirteenth to the twenty-eighth verse of the fourteenth chapter, we have in a prophetical poem the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. It was delivered, as nearly as can be ascertained, about two hundred years before it was fulfilled. The captivity of the Jews in Babylon is not here expressed, but implied, and took place about one hundred and thirty years after this prediction of Isaiah was announced. The Medes, indeed, when the prophet lived, were a very insignificant and uninfluential people, inhabiting only a province of Assyria. The former part of the prophecy most commentators have agreed in considering one of the most beautiful examples of elegant Hebrew poetry. It is remarkable for the variety of its imagery, the purity of its diction, and the sublimity of its sentiments. The latter part presents a magnificent triumphal ode, which,

for beauty, force, brevity, and perspicacity of expression, has no rival, as a mere composition, in the literature of any land. From the twenty-eighth verse to the close of the fourteenth chapter, we have a series of denunciations against the Philistines, which were fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah—as we read, 2 Kings xviii. 8: "He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city."

Thus we have reviewed the labours of the evangelical prophet during the reigns of two of the kings of Judah, who occupied the throne in his lifetime; and what remarkable, thought-inspiring subjects do his prophecies contain! How constantly do we witness him condemning iniquity, inviting to repentance, entreating men to trust in God, and pleading with them to remember that in his arm is salvation! How frequently do we behold him, hundreds of years before his arrival, realizing the coming of the Saviour, describing his remarkable birth, foretelling his excellence, wisdom, and glory, and revealing the grandeur, stability, and universality of his kingdom! Oh, what a study are the prophecies of Isaiah! For breadth of view, for grasp of intellect, for grandeur of thought and composition, for holiness of desire and devotedness of life in the work of the Lord, how beautiful his character, and how admirable his genius!

KING HEZEKIAH, AND ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES AND ADMONITIONS DURING HIS REIGN.

Mercifully for Judah, Hezekiah, the son and successor of king Ahaz, was very unlike his father. He was a pious man; yet in some things he erred, as we shall have occasion to show, in the course of this narrative; but, with great boldness for God, he overthrew all the strongholds of idolatry, all the innovations destructive

of the worship of Jehovah introduced by his father, and restored the Temple service. He was a complete iconoclast. Even the brazen serpent of Moses, which he had set up in the wilderness as a type of the Saviour, by looking on which all who were stung by the fiery flying serpents instantly became whole, and which was now an object of superstitious veneration, he overthrew —caused the altar illegally erected by Ahaz to be destroyed, commanded that the various festivals should be regularly celebrated, and even invited the Hebrews of the ten tribes constituting the kingdom of Israel, such of them as remained faithful to the God of their fathers, to come and participate in his service. In the sixth year of his reign he had conquered the kingdom of Israel, and on this account had an extensive opportunity of being spiritually as well as temporally useful to them. Like his great ancestor, David, he provided for the singing of psalms in the worship of the Lord, reorganized means for the religious instruction of the people, prepared a new collection of the moral maxims of Solomon, and aided, both by his example and influence, in restoring a better and more godly condition of things throughout his kingdom. The results, as might be expected, were very blessed. His piety recovered peace and prosperity amongst the people. He shook off the Assyrian yoke, to which his father had voluntarily and most ignominiously submitted; he conquered the Philistines, who, during the reign of Ahaz, had carried their arms into the southern parts of Judea; he strengthened the city of Jerusalem, by extending its fortifications and magazines. Nor did he disregard the health, any more than the piety and prosperity, of his subjects; he erected a "pool," as it was called, (though in fact it was a large reservoir,) and by an aqueduct plentifully supplied the city with water. In one word, the historian emphatically informs us that "the Lord

was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth."

The prophecies of Isaiah, under the reign of Hezekiah, begin with the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters. They contain a prediction against Moab. They were delivered during the first year of the sovereignty of this king, and were fulfilled in the fourth year, when Shalmaneser invaded the kingdom of Israel. It is remarkable, that during the painful denunciation of this people, an invitation is given to them to welcome the truth and to receive a knowledge of the promised sacrifice, prefigured as about to be offered on Mount Zion. Whilst "within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all the great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble." The whole of the succeeding prophecies, on to the close of the twenty-third chapter, are announcements of the designs of the Almighty with the nations round about Judah. Considerable conjecture has connected itself with the time of the delivery of the seventeenth chapter. Bishop Lowth supposes that it was at the commencement of the reign of Ahaz. With all others, he is agreed in referring it to the whole kingdom of Syria, under the title of Damascus, and to Israel under that of Samaria. The judgments spoken of actually occurred during the invasion of Tiglath-pilezer, (2 Kings xvi. 9,) when he took Damascus, overran Israel, and led numbers of the Israelites captive into Assyria. The completion of the prophecy, however, occurred during the reign of Shalmaneser, in which he made a conquest of Israel. The three last verses form a separate prediction, in which the prophet makes a striking reference, under the figure of "the rushings of many mighty waters," to the formidable invasion of Sennacherib, and to his sudden overthrow—so sudden, that at night it is "trouble, and before the morning he is not."

The eighteenth chapter contains a most obscure announcement. The people to whom it refers, the end it regards, the subject matter which it unfolds, the person sending the ambassadors, and the people to whom they are sent, as has been frequently stated, are all alike doubtful. Vitringa considers it as directed against the Assyrians; Rosenmüller, as referring to the Ethiopians; and Bishop Lowth applies it to the Egyptians. We are inclined to agree with the latter, both on account of the language so plainly pointing to Egyptian symbols, and also from the fact that Egypt was at this time in alliance with Judah, and suffered in common with the latter country from the invasion of Sennacherib. Of the next chapter there can be no doubt. If the previous one was obscure, this is obvious; and a sore affliction it records as coming upon Egypt, both as regards civil disturbances, and grinding tyrannies. But it does not conclude without mercy, as well as judgment; even to the call of Egypt into the faith of the Church, and to the covenant of Egypt with Assyria and Israel, on which God pronounces a blessing. The twentieth chapter prefigures the captivity both of Egypt and Ethiopia. Babylon is announced as doomed to terrible desolation —a city beyond all others referred to as being punished; and this second woe upon it is recorded in the first ten verses of the twenty-first chapter. Nor did it tarry long before it was fulfilled: it was accomplished when it was taken by the Medes and Persians. The style of this prophecy is extraordinary. The prophet himself personifies the ancient city: proclaims its approaching troubles—realizes them, and, in a strain of remarkable eloquence, as he recounts the feasting of king and nobles, their imagined security, proclaims the coming of their woe—the presence of a lion—the approach of a war-chariot; and in a moment afterwards echoes the shout, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" The next two verses speak of Edom and Seir; and the remaining por-

tion contains a prophecy concerning Arabia, which was fulfilled within a few months of its delivery.

We cannot enter minutely into the predictions contained in every part of Isaiah's noble book; we aim at a mere outline, so as to realize the prophet's labours, and to obtain a somewhat correct idea of their bearing. We have seen, in what has already been reviewed, that with unvarying constancy he seizes on the most minute opportunity of announcing the coming of Messiah and the glory connected with the advancement of his kingdom. This is even more apparent in what remains to be considered. In the twenty-second chapter we have three sections, the first closing with the fourteenth verse, and presenting us with a stirring description of the invasion of Judea and the capture of Jerusalem—by some supposed to be that of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, and by others that of the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. Vitringa imagines that there may be a reference to both invasions. The second section, closing with the nineteenth verse, is personal, and mentions by name Shebna, the king's treasurer, who is to be distinguished from Shebna, the scribe, elsewhere mentioned in the history of Hezekiah. He to whom Isaiah here refers, appears to have been a man very unworthy of his high position, and, on account of his conduct, was given up to suffer and die in captivity. And the last part of the chapter predicts the height of power and influence to which Eliakim should rise in Judah—how he should be covered with the official robes, and possess the key as the high treasurer of the kingdom, or as keeper of the Temple. Calmet thinks that he succeeded his father, Hilkiah, as High Priest under Manasseh. The twenty-third chapter foretells the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, and closes by predicting the conversion of the Tyrians to Christianity—a prediction, the first-fruits of which were presented to the Church in the days of the apos-

tles, in the formation of a Christian community in Thyatira, and by believers gathered together in other parts.

Once more Isaiah returns to the people of God dwelling in Judea, predicts great trials as coming upon them, the Lord's merciful preservation of a remnant, their restoration to their own land, their conversion to Christ, and the downfall of Antichrist. These prophecies of his are contained in the next chapters, beginning with the twenty-fourth and ending with the thirty-fifth. Our view of what these unfold, is as follows. He commences, in chapter twenty-fourth, with an account of an invasion of Judah, occasioning both famine and desolation. Regard may here be had not merely to those undertaken by Shalmaneser, Nebuchadnezzar, or, long afterwards, by the Romans, but to all the three. Vitringa alone considers it depicts what occurred under Antiochus Epiphanes. Bishop Lowth esteems it as peculiarly descriptive of that by the Romans. Still, the chapter ends with hope; for Jehovah shall reign in Mount Zion; and that, too, "before his ancients gloriously." The twenty-fifth chapter is a noble song, full, in the first instance, of thanksgiving, even for judgments; then glowing with a blessed account of the provisions of Mount Zion, the Church of the living God; and ending with an animating prophecy of the final triumph of his people over all their enemies. The twerty-sixth chapter is also a hymn, in which the prophet mingles together thanksgiving both for temporal and spiritual mercies, shows the longings of his soul after salvation, speaks of the great spiritual resurrection under the gospel awaiting all nations, and exhorts all who love the Lord to remain prayerfully exercised concerning the fulfillment of God's purposes, and the doings of his providence in the kingdoms of the world.

We now enter, in the twenty-seventh chapter, upon a most interesting account of the nature, measure, and

design of the dealings of Jehovah with his "chosen people." This is brought before us in the form of a parable. Isaiah, having announced the divine judgment as following upon their enemies, again sets forth the Church under the figure of a vineyard, and God himself as its keeper. Daily does he water it; neither night nor day is evil permitted to befall it. As a watchman, he shows the omnipotence of his power; and as a gardener, the excellence of his planting and culture, in making it to prosper. Not that it is to be all sunshine and growth. With the good vine-dresser, there is pruning as well as planting; and the chastisements that his people need, he does not withhold. Whilst at the close it is shown that in the day of his mercy, when the trumpet of the gospel is sounded, they that are ready to perish, they that are outcasts, come and are welcome, sharing in the worship of the holy mountain of the Lord's house. Under the title of "the crown of pride," or Samaria and Ephraim, mentioned at the commencement of the twenty-eighth chapter, Israel, consisting of the ten tribes, is addressed. Their destruction and dispersion, because of their sins of pride and drunkenness, is proclaimed; which took place, as we have already hinted, under Shalmaneser. Judah and Benjamin, the remaining two tribes, which constituted the kingdom of Judah, are to be spared as a remnant, though their sin too, of intemperance, is condemned—a sin of which both priests and people were guilty. Under Hezekiah, this latter kingdom begins well, and the best results are prognosticated; but speedily they vanish, their rulers make a covenant with death, and the whole closes with reproofs and threatenings because of their profanity and disobedience. Yet, even amidst this ill foreboding, the better time is not overlooked. "Therefore, saith the Lord God, Behold! I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

Now our attention is arrested by the actual foretelling of what has previously been more faintly shadowed forth. In the twenty-ninth chapter, by the name of "Ariel," Jerusalem is spoken of, and over it woe is pronounced. The armies of Sennacherib go up and besiege it. The inhabitants are as if drunken with terror; but in a night the storms of the Lord scatter their enemies and drive them away, as the morning light does the painful dream. This is to be among men as a matter of wonder. Yet their religion, after all, remains a mere form—drawing near to him with their lips, whilst their hearts are far from him. In the later years of Hezekiah's reign they are again to prosper; though even then they need to be chastened. God's people were ever forbidden to make alliances with the nations of idolatry around them. Often did they suffer through disobedience to this divine wish. The friendship of Egypt had been courted, and in the thirtieth chapter, Isaiah denounces this false confidence. He shows them that one is stronger than a thousand, having God with him, and concludes by revealing how utterly the Lord will destroy the Assyrians, to the joy of his people. In the thirty-first chapter the same warning, and a like prediction, are repeated—false trust in Egypt, and certain ruin from the arm of God as coming upon Assyria.

A new series of lively oracles demand our consideration. In the thirty-second chapter, the prophet becomes absorbed in predicting things which were to be revealed concerning the Church of God in "the last days." He foretells the glory and the excellency of Zion's King, his righteous refuge and his upright rule—the blessed characteristics of his reign, the satisfying nature of his salvation, and the unfading glories of his kingdom. He describes those who shall come and partake of these mercies—the stammerer, the rash, the vile, the covetous, and the unworthy—and all as receiving a rich and

abiding blessing, a regenerating and renewing redemption; and, to bring into a condition of mind suitable for the reception of this great salvation, he rebukes the women of Zion, and calls upon them to repent, showing them what judgments must first come upon field and fortress, village and city, of the land. But when the gospel is revealed, when the Spirit is poured out, then shall the change come; and, in expectation of it, happy are they "who sow beside all waters." Nor does this subject stop here: in the next chapter it is continued. In the first portion of it, the enemies of his Church are smitten and flee, and God is exalted; and in the concluding part, the privileges of his people are recorded—Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, is beheld a quiet habitation: the king is seen in his beauty, and the land that is afar off: yea, "the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us."

The thirty-fourth and the thirty-fifth chapters comprise a distinct prophecy by themselves, and contain a complete and beautiful poem, consisting of two parts. The first part concerns the enemies of the King of Zion; and so important is it esteemed, that all nations are called to listen to it. It may immediately refer to Edom and other hostile forces of that time arrayed against Judah, but most assuredly has regard to the overthrow of all who withstand the progress of the gospel and the advancement of Messiah's work. The second part portrays entirely the beauty of the Church in its brightest days, when the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; when the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; when the lame shall walk, and the dumb sing; when on every hand the waters of the gospel shall flow forth, as streams in the desert; when the parched lands shall be filled with pools, and the uninhabitable parts become habitable;

when the earth shall yield her increase; and when there shall be one highway for all nations, "the way of holiness," in which no molestation will occur, no foe be found; when all lands shall become vocal, and one song shall fill all lips, and that a song of joy; for in that day sorrow and sighing shall flee away! This, this, is the millennium—the triumph of truth, the day of the gospel, the reign of Christ!

THE HISTORICAL PORTION OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES, AND HIS MESSAGE TO HEZEKIAH.

Once and again, throughout our analysis of Isaiah's predictions, we have seen him foreshadow what is now to be filled up, and have heard him predict what is now to be accomplished. He of course refers to the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib. The simple facts of this history are the following—Ahaz, as we have mentioned, had rendered Judah subject to Assyria. Hezekiah, his son, had burst through that bondage, and set his kingdom free. This occurred during the days of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria. Sennacherib was his son and successor. He determined to repair the breach, and restore what his father had lost. For years he prepares for the expedition, and marches forth at last with an immense army. City after city, and district after district, of Judea, fall into their possession, and in great force they go to besiege Jerusalem. Hezekiah, seeing he had now nothing left to him but this one distinguished city, sent an embassy to the conqueror, who was then at the siege of Lachish, saying, "I have committed a fault; but withdraw your army, and I will bear whatever you shall impose upon me." Sennacherib demanded three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold, which Hezekiah remitted to him. He received the tribute, but did not fulfill his engagement, and continued still in Judea. On the

contrary, he sent three of his chief officers—Rab-shakeh, Rab-saris, and Tartan—to demand that he should immediately surrender; who uttered many fearful blasphemies against Jehovah, the God of Judah, and who recounted what Assyria had done in laying waste other kingdoms. Hezekiah pleaded the agreement, and could not deliver up the city, in the circumstances. Sennacherib, with his whole army, now marches against Jerusalem.

All was terror and dismay. The king sends to the prophet to intercede with God on their behalf. Isaiah predicts, once more, the utter destruction of their enemies. Hezekiah now goes, where from the first he ought to have gone, to Jehovah, in earnest intercessory prayer. The prophet gives the king the answer of the Lord, at the same time rebuking him for his distrust, and informing him of the suffering which the country should endure; but reassuring him that the Assyrians should not enter the city. They gather, these hosts of Assyria, a mighty army. They hasten, by forced marches, towards Jerusalem. As far as man could perceive, its fate seemed to be sealed. But God judges not as man judges. Not a soldier of Sennacherib's army, as the shades of the evening fall, but believes that on the morrow they shall be lodged within the city's walls. Who knows what a day shall bring forth? Onward they come, hastening for to-morrow's destruction. With thousands, this night is their last night. The Angel of Destruction is sent by God, and sweeps over them as the fatal simoon sweeps across the desert; and that night there were laid low in death, of the proud armies of Assyria, one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. Sennacherib himself retreats, and dwells in Nineveh, where, worshipping, on an occasion, Nisroch, his false god, he was put to death by two of his own sons. How safe that sovereign, and how strong that city, whose God is the Lord! Never was this truth more emphatically demonstrated than in

the narrative contained in the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of Isaiah's prophecies.

Success is ever difficult to bear. When the danger is gone, we are ready to forget the hand that brought us succour, and to ascribe to ourselves what alone belongs to our God. The king of Judah was but mortal, and equally exposed with other men to this temptation. He must, however, be humbled and instructed. Who better fitted, as an instrument, for the accomplishment of this work, than the prophet whom he knew as the Lord's servant, and esteemed both for his own and for his works' sake? Hezekiah falls sick with a deadly sickness. He lay in his chamber, prostrate through his affliction. Surely this of itself was enough to endure. But, no; he must learn as well as suffer. Isaiah visits him on his couch. It is well when kings have faithful counsellors. The prophet was no courtier, and dealt in no flattery. He comes with divine authority, having a mission from on high, and says, "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." What a message! Yet he must be taught how to bear the overthrow of the army of Sennacherib; therefore his sickness follows, lest he should be too elated, and forget the Most High. Deeply does the king feel it, and powerfully is he exercised before God in the circumstances. He betakes himself to prayer. He had previously felt its efficacy and known its power; and, turning his face to the wall, with strong crying and tears did he pray and prevail with God. Isaiah is sent a second time to the king. He is commissioned to inform him that the Lord had lengthened out his life for fifteen years; and then, to confirm him both in regard to the defeat of his enemies, the safety of the city, and his own recovery, a sign is given to him—namely, the going back by ten degrees of the sun's rays, on the sundial of Ahaz. Hezekiah receives this confirmation, is restored, and

in one of the most beautiful and touching hymns of praise found in holy Scripture, does he celebrate the divine mercy and renew his covenant of service.

Alas, for frail man! he must have something whereof to glory. Danger has departed from Jerusalem, sickness has left the king, and a season of repose and prosperity has been vouchsafed to Judah. The soul of Hezekiah is elated with pride. He must be taught better. Trials are sent from God to sift his servants, to discover what is in their hearts, to show them their weakness, and to instruct them how in humility and dependence alone they are safe. Many can bear afflictions, few prosperity, without injury. When the tidings had been noised abroad of the illness and recovery of Hezekiah, ambassadors were sent from Babylon to Jerusalem, with presents, to congratulate him. The king receives them most kindly, gives them a cordial welcome, and shows them his treasure-house of gold, and silver, and spices, and ointment, and armour, and all his precious things, with everything of value throughout his kingdom. In this, through vainglory, he sinned. Isaiah comes to him, inquires as to the messengers who had visited him, whence they had been sent, who they were, and what he had shown them, and announces to him the captivity which from Babylon should fall upon his kingdom, the removal of all the riches of the Temple and palace, his own sons taken into bondage and made servants in the palace of the king of Babylon; but not during his reign. This transgression of Hezekiah is very succinctly recorded in 2 Chronicles xxxii. 25, 26, 30, 31. "But Hezekiah rendered not again, according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Heze-

kiah." "And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

Such is the historical account which the prophet records concerning this portion of the Lord's dealings with Judah. The same narration, less abridged, is also found in the Second Book of Kings, in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters; and how interesting and instructive it is throughout! How immediately the Lord dealt with his people, appeared on their behalf, and rescued them from their difficulties! How completely he was their refuge in trouble, their stronghold in the hour of danger, and their help in the time of need! But he will be honoured by them; and when they neglect this, he appears to punish them. Well may the Christian Church contemplate her connection with the Most High, realize her responsibility, and remember her duty. Blessed are they who walk in the ways of the Lord, who keep his commandments, who honour his majesty, and rejoice in his love.

THE CONCLUDING PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH, HIS GOSPEL, AND HIS DEATH.

During the closing part of the reign of Hezekiah, the prophet Isaiah delivered the remaining predictions contained in the inspired book which bears his name. They commence with the fortieth chapter and end with the sixty-sixth. The whole of this series of prophecies is admitted to be the most elegant and evangelical portion of Old Testament scripture. With a frequent reference to the captivity of the Jews, their hardships and their sorrows—as well as with many consolations in connection with their restoration from Babylon, the rebuilding of the city and Temple, and the happiness

of the people after their return to their own land—he foretells the arrival of the promised Messiah; foreshadows, by the deliverance from captivity, the building up of the Church; recounts the sufferings of our Lord, and also the seed which should be given to him as an inheritance; and proclaims the destruction of idolatry, the calling of the Gentiles, the happiness of the righteous, and the final destruction of the wicked.

These noble prophecies consist, in reality, of twelve poems. The *first*, contained in the fortieth and forty-first chapters, regards a promise of comfort to the people of God, interspersed with intimations of his presence and power, and a lively declaration and description of the return of the Jews during the reign of Cyrus. The *second* extends to the close of the forty-third chapter, and celebrates the advent of Messiah and the glory of his kingdom; reproves the Jews for their infidelity and blindness in rejecting the Saviour; declares the salvation of a seed from amongst them, and their felicity once more in their own land; the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, and their return, through him, to Jerusalem; and closes with the most solemn admonitions to repentance, lest they should again suffer the judgments of the Almighty. The *third* reaches to the end of the forty-sixth chapter, and records promises of redemption and the effusion of the Holy Spirit; strikingly describes and exposes the folly of idolatry; speaks again by name of Cyrus, the Babylonish deliverer, and, through him, of the world's Saviour; announces the final conversion of the nations to the truth, and, by gospel light and glory, the ultimate overthrow of everything anti-Christian. The *fourth* foretells the removal of the idols of Babylon, exposes the sin and superstition of worshipping them, when compared with the service of the all-perfect Jehovah, and proclaims the doom of Babylon. The *fifth* exhibits a faithful rebuke of the people of God because of their attachment to false gods, reminds them of the

calamities to which such a course of transgression exposes, and shows them the true deliverance. The *sixth* introduces Messiah in person, declares the extent of his commission, the unbelief with which he should be met by the Jews, the triumph of his Church, and the final ingathering of his own people. And the *seventh* still points to the same hardheartedness and unbelief of Israel—Messiah's sorrows and sufferings—how they ought to receive in him, and what glory the conversion of both Jews and Gentiles will introduce into our world.

But who can enter upon a review of the next section of these inimitable prophetical delineations without a pause? O that fifty-third chapter of Isaiah! It is more the record of an evangelist than a prophet—of one who walked by the side, heard the teaching, witnessed the sufferings and realized the results of Christ's mission—than of one who, hundreds of years before his coming, elevated by the spirit of inspiration, could foresee and recount all he should be, all he should endure, and all he should accomplish. It has been stated, we believe truthfully, that the late excellent Dr. Alexander, the first Bishop of the Anglican Church at Jerusalem, whilst yet a blind and bigoted Jew, was discussing the claims of Christian truth and the evidences put forth for Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah, when, being led to a careful review of the descriptions afforded in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, he saw in them so much of the history of our Lord minutely foretold and in his life strikingly fulfilled, that he was constrained to renounce his Judaism, acknowledge the Saviour, profess his belief in the gospel, and become a preacher of the faith which he once most strenuously opposed.

The fifty-fourth chapter foretells the increase of the Christian Church from amongst all people, and its generally triumphant state. The fifty-fifth and four succeeding chapters recount the trials of Judah, through the

sins of its inhabitants, after the death of Hezekiah, particularly on account of their idolatry in the evil days of Manasseh, who made his children to pass through the fire in the service of Moloch, and who caused the streets of Jerusalem to run with blood; refer once more to Jewish and Gentile conversions in the last times—to the total overthrow of antichrist, the mighty power of the Lord to save, and the felicitous condition of the Church and the world. And from the sixtieth chapter to the close, we have the shining forth of the Church, through the coming of the pure light upon her; the Church's deliverance from all her enemies; the work as all his own, who trod the wine press alone; all nations his kingdom, his enemies reprobated, and his friends established in righteousness and peace for ever.

Thus have we presented a rapid sketch of the subjects which occupied the prophetic spirit of the sublime Isaiah. We have not attempted either a classification of these predictions, or an account of them as fulfilled and unfulfilled. Our aim has been to view them as we have them brought before us in Scripture, to refresh our memories with their inspiring announcements, as well as to induce our readers to enter upon a more careful study of their precious contents. We have aimed at nothing original; whilst we have adopted no view without careful consideration and inquiry. How wonderfully Isaiah's mind dwelt upon the era and delighted to depict the achievements of the dispensation of the gospel of Christ! And well he might. Even in our own days, how marvellous the results which have been realized! island after island in the South Seas casting their idols to the moles and to the bats, every vestige of their former idolatry and barbarism disappearing before the truth, savages becoming saints, unwritten tongues being reduced to grammatical languages, the Scriptures translated and circulated, a literature both native and foreign created, and all within the short

space of a quarter of a century, and without a miracle! And China, once walled in and sealed up from foreigners, by a single tract and a few portions of Scripture revolutionized and opened to gospel light and liberty! India, too, shaken to the foundations of its society, and caste crumbling down before the simple power of truth! O this age! A highway opened everywhere for Christianity, countries brought into near neighbourhood, the nations that have the Bible the most influential of lands on the face of the whole earth, their peoples the most enterprising, their missionaries the most self-denying, and their names everywhere honoured! Surely we live on the verge of distinguished realizations. But before all idolatries, false religions, and anti-Christian systems perish, there must still be mighty convulsions, vast revolutions, and, it may be, fearful judgments.

The gospel by Isaiah appears to us to comprehend but few articles of faith, yet these few are the great essentials of divine truth. The perfection, holiness, and glory, of the one living and true God; the sinfulness of man in his sight and in his service; a great Deliverer from sin, death, and hell; the truth no longer confined to any one nation, but destined to shed its light far and wide upon all; the punishment of the wicked and the security of the righteous—well may he be styled "the evangelical prophet!" How rich in holy truth his writings, and how condemnatory of sin in all its forms every part of his mission! How he died, or where he died, is now all matter of conjecture, nor is it of moment to know. "Though dead, he yet speaketh," and will continue to speak. Even in heaven, his rich revelations of the ways of divine providence, and his sublime unfoldings of the work of divine grace, will, in the light of eternity, afford matter of joyful contemplation. And to be near those "holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"—thrice blessed prospect, glorious anticipation! To mingle in

the society of the chosen in the universe, in the residence of God—with the angels and archangels, those pure and burning spirits who have kept their first estate, and are as holy and devout now as on the day of their creation; nay, all the holier and more devout, because of the centuries in which they have exercised their illustrious powers in the service of their God;—with the "saints made perfect"—Abel, the holy Abel, the first of the human family who entered heaven—Enoch, the first who bodily appeared among the blessed—Noah and his family, the distinguished progenitors of the present races of the world—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the fathers and founders of the Jewish nation,—and, since their time, "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands," from every clime, of every degree of intellectual power and sanctified affection—the profound scholar, the sacred poet, the holy priest and minister, the inspired prophet, the peasant exalted and ennobled by his piety, and the prince humbled, redeemed, and made godlike in his Lord—the saved of all lands and classes of men, all one in the blessed Jesus and in their love and adoration of a Triune God—to be with them and the Saviour for ever—this is heaven! For this "to live is Christ, to die is gain." Yes; and among the countless throng of this heavenly company, occupying no secondary place and encircled with no ordinary interest, is Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, singing in glory the praises of him whom he was honoured to designate on earth, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." O to be prepared to join the matchless band! Encouraging promise from him who is Lord of all—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

JEREMIAH,

THE WEEPING PROPHET.

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH HE PROPHESIED.

WHILST circumstances do not create, yet they constantly affect, the formation of human character. A person of strong feelings is constituted as capable of the realization of great happiness, as he is to become the victim of sore grief. The state of his health, the condition of his family, or the fortunes of his country, may either awaken his deep sympathies to joy, or attune them to lamentation. We are all, more or less, the children of circumstances. Providence intends that it should be so; and by the position in which we are thus placed, we have revealed to us, as by a voice from God, the mission on earth which he designs we should accomplish. It has scarcely been possible for some men to do otherwise than become rich; and it has been equally as impossible for others to succeed. Some have had distinction thrust upon them; and others, of as good character, and it may be greater abilities, have never had the opportunity of being known. Sunshine has radiated every step in one man's course, and gloom has thrown its dark, damp curtains around the whole life of another. But what are the circumstances of our lives but the disposals of Providence, to whom we must trace all, by whose appointment our lot is cast, according to whose perfect counsel our work is ordered, by whose just judgment our recompense is at last apportioned, and our place both in history and in heaven determined?

Jeremiah's mission was one of sorrow. He became the tearful prophet, from the circumstances of the times in which he lived. His country's subjection to Babylon, and the captivity of its inhabitants in that idolatrous land, which had been long predicted, was now at the point of being realized. Nothing could save them. By prophet after prophet had both the kings and tribes constituting the kingdom of Judah been instructed, both in love and in wrath, with mercy and with judgment. A fearful fatuity drove them to fill up the cup of their condemnation. Headlong they hurried onward in their destructive course. Yet Jeremiah stood forth, though quite a youth, to witness for God and to warn them against the day of his anger. It was all in vain. He received nothing in return but the most cruel persecution and ill usage. The people not only disregarded his evil forebodings, but they condemned him because he prophesied evil. The pitiful strains which the compassion of his soul led him to adopt, on account of their truly painful condition, they derided and despised. His severe censures enraged them; and though he was destined even before his birth to the prophetical office, yet he shrank from its fulfillment, and would have excused himself because of his tender years and the responsibility of the undertaking: but the Lord had commanded, and Jeremiah obeyed. Amidst all his suffering and sorrow he was sustained by the thought that what he did God had laid it upon him to accomplish.

Jeremiah was of the tribe of Levi. His father was Hilkiah, "of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin." Anathoth, with its suburbs, was one of the cities appropriated out of the lands of the tribe of Benjamin, by Joshua, "to the children of Aaron, the priests." It was situated about three Roman miles distant from Jerusalem. Some have supposed that Hilkiah, Jeremiah's father, was the High Priest of that name, who found the "Book of the Law"

in the Temple, in the days of king Josiah. There is, however, no decisive evidence leading to this conclusion, his name being a very common one in Judah. Jeremiah was called to fill the prophetical office when he was only in his fourteenth year, and continued his labours for at least forty-two years. He began in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, B. C. 629. He continued his prophecies after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, and is believed to have retired into Egypt, where, after two years, he died. The Lord informed him, when he was entering upon his labours, that he would have to endure much from his countrymen; at the same time revealing to him, that he would be as a wall of brass against the kings, princes, priests, and people of Judah. All this he fully realized. His life was often exposed to danger: he was tried for sedition, but acquitted by the princes of Judah; for prophesying of the captivity he was cast into prison, and narrowly escaped being put to death. Yet from all quarters testimony is amply borne to the integrity, unblemished piety, and patriotism of Jeremiah. A condition of ease and plenty was afforded to him, if he would leave his afflicted countrymen who continued in Judah after the Babylonish invasion; but he preferred remaining behind with them, amidst poverty and every description of hardship.

The character of Jeremiah's prophecies is one of sorrow and condemnation. The style in which he wrote has been described by Jerome as "retaining something of the rusticity of the locality where he was born." This opinion is utterly repudiated by Bishop Lowth, who remarks that "Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as far as relates to style, may be said to hold the same rank among the Hebrews, as Homer, Simonides, and Æschylus among the Greeks. Jeremiah, though deficient neither in elegance nor sublimity, must give place in both to Isaiah. Jerome seems to object against

him a certain rusticity of language; no vestige of which, I must confess, I have been able to discover. His sentiments, it is true, are not always the most elevated, nor are his periods always neat and compact; but these are faults common to those writers whose principal aim is to excite the gentle affections, and to call forth the tear of sympathy or sorrow. This observation is very strongly exemplified in the 'Lamentations,' where these are the prevailing passions: it is, however, frequently exemplified in the prophecies of this author, and most of all in the beginning of the book, which is chiefly poetical. The middle of it is almost entirely historical. The latter part, again, consisting of the six last chapters, is altogether poetical; it contains several different predictions, which are distinctly marked, and in these the prophet approaches very near the sublimity of Isaiah. On the whole, I can scarcely pronounce above half of the Book of Jeremiah to be poetical."

Many of the predictions of Jeremiah were, for the time, merely oral communications; but we learn from him that God commanded that he should write them out for the instruction of his people. "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. Then Jeremiah called Baruch, the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book." It would appear, indeed, that there were four distinct collections of Jeremiah's predictions. The first is that to which we have referred, and contained all that he had delivered up to the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim; the next is the one spoken of in the thirtieth chapter and the second verse, and refers to those which commence at the twenty-sixth chapter and close with the thirty-first; the third collection regards entirely his prophecies de-

livered after the destruction of Jerusalem and the commencement of the captivity; and the fourth is confined to Jeremiah's account of himself and the other Jews left behind in Judea by command of Nebuchadnezzar. This will account for that to which we shall shortly have to refer—the transposition of many of the predictions of our prophet, in the chronological order in which they have come down to us, and as they have been retained in our translation of the Scriptures. When this occurred, or by whom, there are no means afforded us of ascertaining. Dr. Blaney, in his learned version of Jeremiah's works, has endeavoured, with great care, to restore their proper order, and has given us the means of classifying, under the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, and the government of Gedaliah, our account of the predictions, toils, and trials of "the weeping prophet."

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES DELIVERED DURING THE REIGN OF JOSIAH.

An acquaintance with the character of the king is often an inlet to the condition of the people during the period in which he reigns; for either the morality of the age will compel the sovereign and those who surround him, to regard the outward decencies and demands of religion, or the king and court will, to a large extent, either lead the people in the right way, or give loose rein to them to pursue a wrong course. Not that this rule is without exceptions. The very time of which we now write teaches us to the contrary. So much had been imported of evil during previous reigns—so much had the leaven of idolatry and ungodliness spread throughout Judah—that, excellent as was the character of king Josiah, and faithful as he was in the service of Jehovah, still he had much to do to influence the people Godward; and after his death, their

idolatry, which had been pent up, once more broke out, and brought ruin to the land. Yet much was effected by the holy example of this pious king, in restraining from what was evil, and in constraining to what was good.

The good king Josiah was the son of Amon, and grandson of Manasseh. It was foretold concerning him to Jeroboam, three hundred and sixty years before he was born, "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee!" During the reign of his grandfather, Manasseh, idolatry had been established and patronized; and of his own father, Amon, it is recorded that "he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them: and he forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord." Divine grace is a sovereign gift. Many pious parents have been severely tried by having ungodly children; and many worldly parents have been greatly blessed, by members of their families receiving the grace of God and becoming blessings in his Church and to his cause. So was it with Josiah. Succeeding to the throne as early as in his eighth year, he found his kingdom overrun with idolatry and superstition, which, during the period of his minority, he had no power to remove. He appears to have begun his personal reign when he was in his sixteenth year. His first work was to commence a vast religious reformation in the land. He began by denouncing idol worship, destroying its altars, and reorganizing the service of Jehovah in the Temple; and so zealous was he in this work, that he did not confine his efforts to Judah, but carried them into the tribes of Simeon, Ephraim, and Manasseh, and even to the distant tribe of Naphtali—literally fulfilling

the prophecy concerning him, already quoted, by burning dead men's bones, and by destroying the altar and high place dedicated to idolatry at Bethel. It was not, however, before he was in his twenty-sixth year, that the worship of the Temple was fully re-established.

During the period when he was occupied in this pious service it was, that Hilkiah discovered "the Book of the Law," (probably a copy of the Pentateuch,) deposited most likely by some pious priest of a former reign, in the Temple for security. It was brought to Josiah by Shaphan, the scribe, and read to him. He was much affected by what he heard, and by the great neglect of the service of God which had so long prevailed. More zealously than ever he engages in the work of the Most High, and sends a deputation to wait upon Huldah, the prophetess, a distinguished woman of his day, to inquire as to what he ought to do. She informs them of the certain judgments which pended over his people, because of their iniquity in forsaking the Lord; but at the same time tells them that Josiah's reign should be peaceful, and that he should not see these evils in his days, because of his regard to the God of Israel and his anxiety for his honour. The king proceeds with his work of reformation—summons the elders of the people to Jerusalem, and reads to them the Book of the Law. Then together they make a covenant to walk after the Lord, to keep his laws with all their hearts, and to engage in his service as he had commanded. He goes forward in his work of idol demolition; nor did he stop till every grove, and temple, and idol image, in the public places around Jerusalem and throughout the land, were laid low—putting the idolatrous priests to death, and consuming with fire their bones. He then proclaims a Passover feast, according as it was appointed to be kept in the laws of Moses. The people came up to the Temple, headed by the princes of their tribes, from all

parts; and now, with the house of the Lord restored, the ark replaced, every symbol of false worship supplanted by those consecrated to the service of Jehovah, we are told, "Surely there was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah, but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the Lord in Jerusalem."

It was scarcely to be expected that so complete and radical a reformation should be permitted to take place without much opposition. The depravity of human nature, which idolatry and false religion so effectually cultivate—their long-established and inveterate evil habits, and the prejudices of their previous training—all forbid the thought that this could be done without giving offence, and in some form or other producing determined hostility. Nor was it the case. On account of this continued attachment to their evil ways and their false gods, ever and again manifesting itself, they suffered chastisements from the hand of the Lord, even in Josiah's days. The most considerable of these terminated in his death. In the thirty-first year of his reign, and after the land had long prospered, Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, went up with a great army against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. Josiah joined with the Assyrian monarch against this formidable foe, and a battle was fought at Megiddo, in the tribe of Manasseh, in which the king of Judah was slain. Considerable diversity of opinion prevails, in regard to his conduct in joining himself to the Babylonish sovereign in this campaign. Bishop Sherlock strongly reprobates his course, as exhibiting distrust in God; whilst Prideaux justifies it, on account of treaties solemnly entered into by Manasseh, and which were ratified by oath. The manner in which he went into battle, too, has been condemned, going with war-chariots and horsemen, which

were expressly forbidden. On the whole, we are inclined to the opinion, that, excellent as Josiah was, on this occasion his conduct was unjustifiable; whilst his death was the result of his imprudence. Judah now became tributary to Egypt. Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, was his immediate successor; but he reigned only three months, having been taken captive into Egypt, where he died. Eliakim, afterwards called Jehoiakim, was proclaimed king in his stead.

During the sovereignty of Josiah, the prophet Jeremiah appears to have delivered the predictions contained in the first twelve chapters in the book which in Scripture bears his name. The first chapter is the introduction to the whole of his prophetical labours. He begins by announcing his call, showing his objection to it arising from his tender age, and by proclaiming the divine authority of his mission. The work to which he was especially dedicated he sets forth by two visions. One was that of the rod of an almond tree—a rod, as expressive of punishment; and the rod of an almond tree, the earliest of all the trees of the garden in putting forth its bloom, (according to its very name in Hebrew, "Sheked," signifying, "the hasty tree,") and showing that judgment was speedily about to come on Judah: the other vision was that of a seething-pot, whose face was towards the north; indicating the severity of the trials about to be revealed, even as a pot that boileth over a strong fire, and pointing out that they were to come from the countries of the north—the situation, in fact, of the Babylonish and Chaldean territories—those lands which, in fulfillment of the prophet's words, poured forth their mighty multitudes, causing terrible commotion in Judah, and bringing down upon its inhabitants great destruction.

In the second chapter, onward to the sixth verse in the third chapter, we have Jeremiah's first oracle concerning Judah. It commences with a recapitulation

of the regard of Jehovah for the people whom he had chosen; expostulates with them on account of their great ingratitude for his unparalleled goodness; shows them that all their evils originated in their own disloyalty and disobedience; appeals to them in the language of the most pathetic affection; and closes by condemning their departure after other gods, and by calling on them to return, and say, "My father, thou art the guide of my youth!" The next prediction reaches as far as the end of the sixth chapter. By internal evidence, we think it quite obvious that, whilst the former prophecy was delivered at the commencement, this one must have been spoken about the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. It consists of two parts. The first is a condemnation of Judah, for having exceeded the guilt of Israel, whom God had rejected because of apostasy; a charge of hypocrisy, when they were being influenced by their king, and were professedly engaged in measures of reformation from idolatry; offers still of mercy and favour, if they would truly repent, and the hope of a glorious change in gospel times through this holy spirit of penitence; and terminates with an actual assurance of divine blessing on those who now truly confessed and forsook their sins. The second part, after a short and special appeal to Israel, to Jerusalem, and to Judah, once more on the subject of repentance, exhibits in lively colours the prophet's sorrow over Judah's punishment and Zion's overthrow—the captivity of Babylon as approaching, with all its attendant miseries—the depravity of God's people, as shown in their perverseness, impiety, immorality, and corruption both in civil and religious matters—and declares these evils to be the true cause of national ruin.

There were several prophets, besides Jeremiah, engaged in making known the will and purpose of the Lord, during the same period. Baruch, Joel, and Zephaniah, as well as the prophetess Huldah, were con-

temporaries. But not only these; there were false prophets, who, when the servants of Jehovah proclaimed evil, flattered the people with opposite predictions. They taught them that God had too much regard for the honour of his own name to allow his Temple to be profaned, or his holy place to become the abode of strangers; and thus they were deluded and hardened in their wickedness. The next series of predictions engaging attention, recorded from the seventh to the end of the tenth chapter, begins with denouncing these false teachers—shows them that, as Shiloh, where the ark stood and the Lord was worshipped, had become desecrated, so also would the Temple of Jerusalem; and explains that he would cast off Judah, even as he had rejected Israel, because of their sinfulness. This is followed by the prophet justifying, in the name of Jehovah, his severity, by a representation of their impiety. On this account their very sacrifices were unacceptable, as well as because of their disregard of God's messengers. Terrible is the sentence, both on the living and the dead, which he then pronounces—describing how the bones of departed idolaters should be dug up and spread before the sun, and moon, and stars, which they had worshipped. Now a number of personifications occur, and addresses are delivered. First, Jehovah, by his servant, reproves his people for supposing that he would save them because they had his law, though they did not keep it; next, Jeremiah gives vent to his sorrow over approaching Chaldean calamities, and earnestly remonstrates with his countrymen; and next, Jerusalem is introduced, as bewailing her misfortunes and supplicating mercy: the whole presenting, with much vivacity and energy, the wickedness of Judah, the woes that were at hand, and the justice as well as mercy of the Lord.

The latter part of this first division of Jeremiah's prophecies, beginning with the eleventh and closing

with the twelfth chapter, was delivered near the end of Josiah's illustrious reign. Thirteen years had nearly passed away since the people, gathered together at Jerusalem, had covenanted with their king to respect the law and obey the statutes of the Lord their God. But now they had become degenerate. The prophet was therefore sent to recall them to their duty, by proclaiming anew their engagement, and by rebuking them for their disregard of their own righteous resolve. He again forewarns both Jerusalem and all Judea of trials as coming upon them; and hearing of the conspiracy of the men of Anathoth to take away his life, he goes to God with the matter, and is sent to foretell their complete destruction. Emboldened by the success of his prayers, he expostulates with the Lord concerning the prosperity of the wicked; is answered by being informed that it is that they and their wealth may perish together; and is made acquainted with the future restoration of the Jews to their own land, and of the final overthrow and complete destruction of all the unbelieving and disobedient. Here the predictions delivered by Jeremiah in the reign of good Josiah are supposed to terminate; and now a new but most painful epoch commences, with the reign of his successor.

JEHOIAKIM'S REIGN AND JEREMIAH'S PREDICTIONS.

Events now hasten. Long-predicted judgments are at the door. At the death of Josiah, the friends of idolatry leave their hiding-places and gather together their adherents. They are encouraged by the king; for Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God." The condition of Judah, when he succeeded his brother Jehoahaz, was truly lamentable. A heavy tribute was laid upon it by Pharaoh-Nechoh; and because it was not immediately paid, Jehoahaz, the king, was made captive and carried into Egypt, where

he died. Jehoiakim, his successor, raised the required amount—"a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold." Indeed, he was placed upon the throne by Pharaoh-Nechoh, and became a mere governor under him, taxing the people for the tribute which he levied, and ruling at his pleasure.

Jehoiakim was in his twenty-fifth year when he began to reign in Jerusalem, and was king eleven years. His personal history requires to be known, in order to a proper understanding of the predictions which were delivered in his time. The prophet Jeremiah reproaches him with building his house with unrighteousness, with oppressing grievously his subjects, with keeping back the wages of those whom he employed; charges him with inhumanity as well as with avarice, and with following his inclinations to barbarity and wickedness to the most abominable extremes. Among others of his cruel deeds he sent messengers into Egypt to bring from thence the prophet Urijah, whither he had fled, whom he put to death by the sword, and left him without burial. Such signal wickedness, as might have been expected, brought down upon him the indignation and punishment of Jehovah. After about four years' subjection to Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, marched up against Jerusalem, took it after a short siege, and restored Jehoiakim to the throne; but not before he had robbed the Temple of its precious vessels and ornaments, had placed the land under tribute, and had taken to Babylon, as hostages, several young men, the sons of the principal Hebrews, amongst whom were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, to be employed in the service of his court, and to be engaged in the concerns of his kingdom; thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah to Hezekiah, delivered more than a hundred years previously, that the sons of his family should wait upon the king of Babylon.

The Babylonish captivity dates its commencement from this subjection of Judah and Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah reckons from the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim; Daniel begins with the third year. This apparent discrepancy is easily accounted for, by a consideration of the different modes of computation adopted. The former begins with the close of Nebuchadnezzar's siege and his actual possession of the city, and the latter with the commencement of his invasion of Judah; the former terminates the captivity at the end of the seventieth year, when the Jews had really returned from Babylon, and the latter when it was decided upon, leave being granted and the return having begun. Hence the difference of a year between them in their accounts of the same matter. At first, Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoiakim in chains, determined to carry him to Babylon; but afterwards he restored him to liberty, and reinstated him upon his throne—only, however, as his vassal. It was at this period that Jeremiah, by the command of God, had all the prophecies which he had delivered, written by Baruch, the scribe, and in the following year had them read by him in the Temple, in the hearing of all the people. Jehoiakim heard of this, and ordered the book to be brought to him. He heard a page or two read; when, enraged at their contents, he had the prophecies cut up and burned. He also gave orders for seizing Jeremiah and Baruch; but mercifully they escaped out of his hands. Again the prophet had his predictions transcribed; pronouncing in others which followed, fearful maledictions against the king on account of his wickedness—maledictions of which he soon realized the import. Amongst others, Jeremiah foretold that "he should be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." Three years after the subjection of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiakim rebelled; when the king of Babylon sent up against

him a powerful army, consisting of troops of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, who reduced the country to a state of complete bondage and took many Jews captive to Babylon. Four years after this, Jehoiakim himself was taken, slain, and thrown into the common sewer of the city, as the prophet had foretold.

The prophecies delivered by Jeremiah during the reign of Jehoiakim commence with the thirteenth chapter of his book. In it he exhibits the utter ruin of Judah by two symbols: the one, that of a linen girdle left to rot; and the other, bottles or skins filled with wine—foretelling the fulness of destruction about to be revealed. A personal address is also delivered both to the king and queen, informing them how they were to be stripped of their independent sovereignty and denuded of their crown of glory. This latter clearly fixes the period of these prophetic announcements to be near the commencement of Jehoiakim's reign. The next two chapters were soon afterwards delivered. In these he indicates approaching famine, because of the invasions which their iniquities had provoked, their continued impenitence under all their trials, the sure decree of God against the land, and a very touching account of the hatred which the prophet had brought upon himself by his faithfulness and fearlessness in declaring the divine will. In every age sin has hated rebuke, and sought the destruction of the brave and the good for condemning it. The sixteenth and seventeenth chapters are partly a reinforcing of previous predictions. Burdened in spirit on account of the coming captivity, Jeremiah once more refers to it—adding on this occasion a very interesting detail concerning the restoration. His burning spirit then, bursting through the trammels of so narrow a circle, foresees the far-off restoration under the gospel, with the coming in of the Gentiles; refers to the constant tendency of men and nations to rest upon mere human aid, instead of look-

ing for protection to God; and, in connection with this, is commanded to proclaim the sanctity of the Sabbath, even at the gates of Jerusalem—an ordinance than which, with all its hallowed privileges, none is better calculated to remind man of the divine existence, of the claims resting upon him to honour his Maker, and of the value of that service to the true elevation of society, the civilization of the world, and the spread of the gospel.

For bold figure, in putting forth an important truth, Jeremiah is not surpassed by any of the prophets of the Lord. He is desirous of instructing his countrymen concerning the absolute power of Jehovah over kingdoms and peoples. This is done in the eighteenth chapter, by the simile of the potter, in being able to mould at pleasure the plastic clay. Well therefore may this be followed by serious and solemn appeals to repentance and reformation. Nay; he is anxious to impress the Jews with the actual destruction which God ordains against the ungodly, and that because of their iniquity. Easily is this accomplished by him who rules on high—as easily as the breaking of a potter's vessel. This he shows in the nineteenth chapter. Unpalatable truths are these to an impious and rebelling race. Ire is kindled against him: Jeremiah is apprehended by Pashur, the priest, and put in the stocks; and in the twentieth chapter the prophet mourns in the midst of his trials, and bewails his birth. The next three chapters contain predictions which were delivered at different times. A deputation is sent to him, consisting of Pashur and Zephaniah, by Zedekiah, the king, to inquire concerning the war of Nebuchadnezzar and the captivity. This is contained in the twenty-first chapter, and shows that this portion of Jeremiah's predictions has been transposed, and ought to have been connected with the twenty-fourth chapter, and the proper place of both as preceding the thirty-second; for Zedekiah became king not immediately after Jehoia-

kim, but after his son Jeconiah. At the gate of the king's palace—Jehoiakim being still king—the prophet exhorts to repentance, and confirms his appeal with promises and threats; foretells the death, as well as captivity, of Shallum, the king's brother; denounces against the monarch's family a series of misfortunes; informs him of the disasters which will come upon his son and successor, Jeconiah, and of the continual exclusion of his posterity from the throne of Judah. Nor shall the king alone be warned. The priests, the pastors of the people, are now exhorted. Condemned for their disregard of the best interests of the people, for destroying and scattering them—the prophet describes a far different time, when the remnant shall be gathered, holy shepherds be sent to minister unto them and feed them—when Messiah shall appear—when he shall come, "the Lord our righteousness," in whose days Judah shall be redeemed and Israel shall be saved. The picture of this blessed time contrasts strongly in the prophet's mind with what actually existed around him; and in the most unmeasured language he concludes the twenty-third chapter by denouncing judgments against false teachers and the mockers of true prophets.

It is worthy of observation that Jeremiah does not confine his predictions to Judah, or to the reign of the coming Messiah. This appears when we study especially that section of his prophecies which begins with the twenty-fifth chapter and concludes with the forty-sixth. Having witnessed the woe coming on his own country, he goes beyond its limits, and speaks of the sure fate of others. He is commanded to take a cup of fury in his hand: he obeys; and under this simile he passes it round to Egypt, to all the kings of the surrounding nations, and finally to Babylon, here called Sheshach. Having accomplished this work, to him the most momentous was his own country; and to avert evil from it, he prays, exhorts, and entreats its king and

people to repent. It is vain. Indeed, he is apprehended for so doing, and accused. He is arraigned before the princes of the land, but permitted to plead his own cause; and in the spirit of a genuine heroism, announces before them all that he had elsewhere prophesied. The case of Micah, who predicted, in the days of Hezekiah, Jerusalem's destruction, is cited as a precedent; and as he escaped punishment, though he had spoken evil, so Jeremiah escaped. Yet it was at this very time that the prophet Urijah was brought out of Egypt and put to death, as if Jehoiakim would make an example, and thus endeavour to silence our prophet. But no; he had work to do, and it must be done. He places in contrast the obedience of the Rechabites to the commands of their father Jonadab, with that of Judah to their Redeemer and Lord.

The Rechabites, it may here be remarked, were a strange people. They derive their name from Rechab, the father of Jonadab. It is not known when Rechab lived, or what was his origin. The sect which bore his name were Kenites, and singers in the house of the Lord. They were distinguished from the Israelites by their retired life, and by their dislike of houses and cities. Their great founder, Jonadab, laid on them his injunction not to build houses, nor to plant vineyards; to have no lands, and to dwell in tents; and never to drink wine. They most implicitly obeyed his injunction; and in the degenerate age of the prophet Jeremiah, when they were invited to come into the Temple and drink wine, during the siege of Jerusalem, they answered, "We will drink no wine; for so Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us." On this account was the prophet inspired to rebuke Judah, in these words: "The words of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; yet I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, but ye hearkened not unto me." And

then, turning to the Rechabites, he prophesied and said, "Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab, your father, therefore Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." The Rechabites were led captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. Hence the seventieth Psalm is said to have been sung "by the sons of Jonadab, and by the principal captives." They returned from bondage, and finally settled in the city of Jabez, beyond Jordan. No mention is made of them by the prophets after the captivity. Useful men those Rechabites were in Judah; alway lifting a protest, by their self-denying habits, against the luxury and intemperance of God's ancient people: and even in our own time, those who have adopted their name, whatever may be said otherwise of their principles, have at least been honoured to check the drunken customs, and to call attention to the brutalizing results of intemperance.

In the thirty-sixth chapter is given the divine command, to which we have already referred, which led Jeremiah to employ Baruch to transcribe all his predictions, and to read them to the people on a fast-day. This made the princes also to desire that they should hear them. As their contents are made known, they are filled with consternation, and advise Baruch and Jeremiah to conceal themselves; whilst they communicate their feelings to the king, and beg him also to hear them read. With this request he readily complies; and so enraged does he become, that he cuts the roll to pieces and has it burnt. Jeremiah is commanded to have it rewritten, and to denounce divine vengeance against Jehoiakim, on account of his wickedness. The prophet fears for his life, but is assured by God that by a special providence he should be protected. Hence, both of Baruch and Jeremiah, it is said, "the Lord hid them."

The remaining prophecies delivered during this reign

were spoken against several of the surrounding heathen nations. They are recorded in the forty-sixth to the close of the forty-ninth chapters, and are supposed to have been placed near the end of the Book of Jeremiah, with some others, as being unconnected with the history of Judah. They contain a prophecy of the defeat of the Egyptians, who garrisoned Charchemish, by the Chaldeans, and of the complete conquest of that country by Nebuchadnezzar; the conquest of the land of the Philistines, of Tyre, and of the country of Moab, by the armies of the same king; also his subjugation of the Moabites, the land of Edom, of Damascus, and of Kedar. How this king of Babylon is exalted! what victories everywhere attend upon his arms! how he is raised on high, that by and by he may be laid low! Even Judah must acknowledge his sway! Jerusalem must bear his yoke. What judgments the ungodliness of kings and people, called by the name of the Lord, have brought upon themselves! How Israel might have been spared, how Judah might have prospered! but their forgetfulness of him who had in all ages been near to them to bless them, and their attachment to false gods and vicious practices, were such as demanded interference, and required of Heaven the severest reprobation. During the lifetime of the successor to the throne of Jehoiakim, divine chastisements were inflicted, and that without mercy.

THE REIGNS OF JEHOIACHIN AND ZEDEKIAH, THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, AND THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

It does not appear that Jeremiah delivered many of his prophecies during the sovereignty of Jehoiachin, the immediate successor of Jehoiakim: in fact his reign only lasted three months and ten days. He co-operated with his father in the kingdom for about ten years. This accounts for what otherwise would seem to be con-

tradictory statements in the books of the Kings and the Chronicles. In the former (2 Kings xxiv. 8) it is said that he was eighteen years old when he began to reign; and in the latter (2 Chronicles xxxvi. 9) it is stated that he was only eight years. Both declarations are true: with this explanation—that the former refers to the period when he actually became king, and the latter to the time when he began to reign in conjunction with his father. He is spoken of as having been placed on the throne by the people; but Josephus intimates that he was the nominee of Nebuchadnezzar, whilst the nation acknowledged him as Jehoiakim's successor. The circumstances of his father's death led the Chaldeans to fear that, as speedily as he could, he would revolt against them; they therefore sent an army to besiege Jerusalem. Jehoiachin would not expose the city to destruction on his account, but sent his mother and nearest relatives as hostages to the commanding officer, having first received a pledge upon oath that neither they nor the city should be injured. This, however, would not satisfy Nebuchadnezzar. He required that the king himself should be brought to Babylon. This was done; when he was accompanied with about 10,832 others, inhabitants of Jerusalem, consisting of the most distinguished men of war, the best artificers, and the most industrious tradesmen. The object of the king of Babylon in thus gathering into the district of Babylonia all the good workmen and others from different countries has been discussed; for a moment it cannot be doubted, but that his desire was to render his kingdom the most beautiful and flourishing in the world.

Jehoiachin is spoken of by Jeremiah (in the twenty-second chapter of his book, and in the twenty-fourth verse) as a very bad prince, whose sins had merited the divine indignation. "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence." Then,

referring to the fact that he should have no son who should become successor to his throne (in the thirtieth verse), he says—"Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." This of course regards an heir of his own body to the kingdom—for he was the father of Salathiel, as well as of other children; but not one of his race ever reigned. In nothing was Jehoiachin successful as a king; but, carried to Babylon, it is believed that he was penitent, and that God showed him mercy. He appears to have been honoured above all the captive princes at the Babylonish court, and to have been treated with much consideration. He died in exile, but it is not known in what year.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah before the captivity in Babylon, was the son of Josiah, and uncle of Jehoiachin, his predecessor. He was also called Mattaniah. He was a tributary sovereign to Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he swore that he would maintain fidelity. He was twenty-one years of age when he commenced his reign, and was king in Jerusalem for eleven years. His character has been recorded both in the Book of the Kings and in that of the Chronicles. In the latter it is thus given (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12, 13):—"He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking as the mouth of the Lord. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel." The inhabitants of Jerusalem imitated his ungodly example, and abandoned themselves to all the abominations of the Gentiles. Sinfulness thus increasing, the period of punishment was hastened. The cup rapidly filled, the judgments of the Lord tarried not, the day of doom began to dawn, dark lowering clouds por-

tended the coming storm, and the predictions of the prophets now become a dire reality.

We have intimated our belief, that the twenty-fourth chapter in the prophecies of Jeremiah has been transposed. It was delivered during Zedekiah's reign, and consequently has reference to circumstances as they existed in his days. Many of the Jews, as we have seen, had already been removed to Babylon; those that remained took no warning from the judgments which had befallen their brethren. The prophet describes the actual state of his countrymen, both those who were removed and those who remained behind. He foreshadows their future condition. He witnesses two baskets of figs placed before the Temple of the Lord—"one basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad." By the former, the good figs, he represents those Jews who were at Babylon, who were afterwards to be restored to their own land—"built up and not pulled down, and planted and not plucked up;" who should have a heart to know the Lord, and who should renew their covenant with him, returning to him "with their whole heart." And by the latter, the bad figs, he sets forth Zedekiah, the princes, and the people, still abiding in Jerusalem and throughout Judah, and those also dwelling in Egypt, who did evil in the sight of the Lord, and against whom he predicts as at hand famine, sword, and pestilence, till they should be fully uprooted from the land which he had given to them and to their fathers.

In the first year of his reign, Zedekiah sent an embassy to Babylon, consisting of Elasah, son of Shaphan, and Gemariah, son of Hilkiah—probably to carry his tribute to Nebuchadnezzar. From the twenty-ninth chapter we learn that Jeremiah sent a letter by them to his exiled countrymen. The object of his epistle was to exhort them to remain contented in their

bondage—to pay no heed to the admonitions of false prophets, who warned them not to regard his predictions—to repeat, that the length of the captivity should be seventy years—and to cheer them with the prospect of a most blessed restoration to their own land. Fearful results, also, does he foretell as coming upon those who thus sought to lead them astray, not one of which failed—a striking example to all succeeding teachers, to speak only as the word of God instructs, and to proclaim the whole counsel of the Lord, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. It is remarkable that of one of these false teachers, Shemaiah, mentioned by name, who not only maladvised the Jews at Babylon, but wrote to Jerusalem to the people to disregard the instructions of Jeremiah—as the prophet predicted, not one of his seed lived to return to their own country or to enjoy the peace of the restoration, and that because "he taught rebellion against the Lord." Then, as if the mind of the prophet was animated with peculiar ardour before the prospect of the coming glory of Judah and Jerusalem, in the next two chapters he portrays the deliverance of the people from all their troubles, the punishment of the wicked by the Lord, and his abounding graciousness to all who serve him in sincerity and truth. Here his soul burns with prophetic fire. Rachel, mourning for her children, is comforted; Ephraim (or Israel under this name), repenting, is restored; the coming of Messiah is foretold—his care over his people is characterized; the new covenant is ratified; the stability of the Church is declared—its amplitude is described, and its glory is proclaimed.

An event of some interest occurred in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. A petition was preferred to Nebuchadnezzar—whether carried by the king himself to Babylon, or by others, cannot be determined—entreating him to restore to the Temple at Jerusalem, its holy vessels. We need scarcely say, that this request

was indignantly rejected. It is curious to observe, nevertheless, how in after years, when the wrath of the Lord was kindled against Babylon, that the presence of these vessels, like the presence of the ark in the cities of the Philistines, was connected with plagues and punishments. It was whilst they were used in the foul revelry of an idolatrous and immoral festival that the hand-writing was visible on the wall, and that the Medes broke in upon them, took the city, and put their king to death. A strange but remarkable fact it is, that throughout the whole period of Jeremiah's labours he appears to have been contradicted by a series of counter-predictions to those which he delivered; and as the burden of all he foretold against his country was one of sorrow and distress, so the flattering tales which his opponents told, being more palatable to the people than that of suffering, they were readily believed, whilst the prophet of truth had to endure persecution. This led on one occasion to a striking encounter. During the reign both of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, the prophet had appeared with bands about him and yokes on his neck, expressive of the coming condition of Judah. Hananiah, a false prophet, had predicted that the vessels of the sanctuary would be returned, as the king had petitioned. For this Jeremiah was as anxious as Hananiah. But it was to be made the test of their truthfulness. In anger, when our prophet declared that they would not be sent back, the false prophet took the yokes from off his neck and brake them, saying, "Even so will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon, within two full years." At which Jeremiah was commanded to reply—"Thou hast broken the yokes of wood, but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron; and because thou makest this people to trust in a lie, therefore I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hana-

niah, the prophet, died the same year, in the seventh month."

In the ninth year of his reign, Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. He appears to have been instigated to this act by the expectation of help from some of the neighbouring kings, who were, like himself, tributaries of the king of Babylon. Ambassadors had been sent to him from Egypt, Edom, and other nations, to enter into a confederacy against Nebuchadnezzar. In opposition to this he was warned and admonished by Jeremiah. All was vain; he joined in the revolt, and the armies of the Assyrian monarch were marched into Judea. Everywhere they were victorious: in a short space of time all the fortified places had fallen before them, and Jerusalem itself was besieged.

During the long season of suffering which now befell the holy city, Jeremiah appears to have been often consulted. The siege began in the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, and continued to the fourth month of the eleventh year. In the course of the events which occurred at this time, the prophet entreats both the sovereign and people to trust not in their strongholds, but in their God—to repent and return to him. They renewed their covenant with the Lord; but we learn in the thirty-fourth chapter of his prophecies, that they perfidiously violated its conditions. In his other predictions at this time he declares that the king of Babylon will triumph, and therefore appeals to the princes of Judah to submit; whilst he informs Zedekiah of his captivity, but that his end would be peaceful and his interment honourable. For a short period the Chaldeans withdraw, suspending their operations, in order to oppose and put to flight the Egyptians, who came up against them. Meanwhile, Jeremiah foretells their speedy return, for which he was cast into a dungeon, from which he was afterwards released, but was still retained a prisoner, though the rigour of his

confinement was abated. The prophet buys a field, as we read in the thirty-second chapter, by which he confirms his belief in the restoration of his countrymen. In the succeeding chapter he predicts the prosperity both of Judah and Israel, announces the advent of Messiah, describes the stability and happiness of his times, the glory of his kingdom, and the peace and good-will which the gospel should diffuse amongst the nations.

The last transaction in which the prophet was engaged before the taking of Jerusalem, was in connection with the advice tendered by him to Zedekiah, to surrender at once to the Babylonians, and so save the city and spare the lives of its inhabitants. Enraged at this, the princes require that he should again be thrown into prison. His bold address, casting the blame of that which may befall him upon his captors, and declaring his determination to be faithful, whatever may be the result, life or death, had previously led to his release. Now he escapes by following the advice of Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, who disguised him in filthy garments and dragged him out of the dungeon. The city falls: Zedekiah is captured, and is carried away, with his sons, to Nebuchadnezzar, then at Riblah, in Syria, who reproached him with his perfidy, caused all his children to be slain before his face, and his own eyes to be put out; and then, loading him with chains of brass, ordered him to be sent to Babylon. Thus were accomplished two prophecies, which seemed contradictory—one of Jeremiah, who said that Zedekiah should see, and yet not see, Nebuchadnezzar with his eyes; and the other of Ezekiel, which intimated that he should not see Babylon, though he should die there. The year of his death is not known; but, as our prophet had foretold, his ashes were honourably regarded, as was wont with the kings of Judah; and the people mourned for him, saying, "Alas, my lord!" Now all the Jews of any

account were removed into the districts of Babylon, and Judah was treated as a province.

Four chapters of Jeremiah's prophecies require, in particular, at this point in his history, to be noticed. They contain accounts of what passed in the land of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem; of what befell the Jews who retreated from Judah, contrary to the divine command; a condemnation of their obstinate idolatry, and a prediction concerning the death of Pharaoh-Hophrah, king of Egypt. These events are recorded in the fortieth and three succeeding chapters. Jeremiah himself, having been set free from his imprisonment by Nebuzar-adan, is permitted either to go to Babylon or to remain in Judea. He went to Gedaliah, the governor of Judea, and abode with him at Mizpeh, who had been set over the Jews that continued in the land, by the appointment of Nebuchadnezzar. But in an evil hour, Ishmael, "of the seed royal," rose up against Gedaliah and slew him. Consulted concerning the retreat of the Jews into Egypt, Jeremiah declares that if they would remain they would be safe, but if they went they would be punished with the sword, famine, and pestilence. Heedless of his advice, and indeed disbelieving it, they retire into Egypt, and compel Baruch and Jeremiah to accompany them. In Egypt it was that he foretold the destruction which should come upon that land—how Nebuchadnezzar should enter it, where he should erect his throne, and how he should put to death their king; all of which were to the letter fulfilled.

Where the prophet died is uncertain. Some writers maintain that he was stoned to death at Taphnis in Egypt, by his own countrymen, enraged at his menaces and reproaches; some think that he returned into Judea; and others, that he died at Babylon. The fifty-second chapter was added to his book of prophecies after his time, subsequently to the return from captivity, of which it gives a short account—constituting a proper close

to his predictions, before entering on the study of his "Lamentations."

Thus have we endeavoured to unfold the contents of Jeremiah's prophecies, as well as sketch the history of the Jews during the era of his mission. The time was a sorrowful and stirring one. The prophet was wonderfully adapted to the necessities of his age. It required boldness, energy, and sternness, as well as sympathy. He combined all, and faithfully accomplished his calling. There are, however, several minute references, scattered amongst his many predictions both concerning Judah and the surrounding nations, to the coming, the birth, the character, and the work of Messiah, which we esteem of remarkable value, and worthy of separate notice. In the twenty-third chapter and sixth verse, he is spoken of as "the Lord, our Righteousness." This name is so important and descriptive of the Redeemer's work, that the remark of Dr. Hales concerning it, which has sometimes been quoted, we cannot refrain from giving at length. Transcribing from the ancient rabbinical book of Ikkarim, he observes how remarkably the writer expresses the reason for this appellation to Christ. "The Scripture calls the name of the Messiah, 'Jehovah, our Righteousness,' to intimate that he will be a mediatorial God, by whose hand we shall obtain justification through his name: wherefore it calls him by 'the name of the name'—that is, the ineffable name, 'Jehovah,' here put for God himself." In the thirty-first chapter, at the close of the twenty-second verse, we have a distinct reference to the miraculous conception of the virgin and the mysterious birth of Immanuel; and in the same chapter, in the thirty-first and succeeding verses, as well as elsewhere, the efficacy of Christ's atonement, the spiritual character of the covenant of grace, and the regenerating power of the truth of the gospel, accompanied by the life-giving influences of the Holy Spirit, are all more or less clearly and

strikingly announced: so that if, less frequently than Isaiah, Jeremiah foretells the coming and describes the kingdom of Messiah, not less distinctly and emphatically, when he does refer to him, does he describe his excellencies and rejoice in his approaching reign.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

It is not possible to read the book of Lamentations, apart from all external evidences of the fact, without arriving at the conclusion that they were penned by Jeremiah; so exactly in all respects—in style, in the events referred to in his prophecies, as well as in spirit—do they accord with the other writings of the prophet. From time immemorial, too, in an uninterrupted and universal testimony we find them ascribed to him. When they were written is a question which has been much disputed. Some writers, both ancient and modern (such as Josephus and Archbishop Usher), maintain that they are the same as are spoken of in 2 Chronicles xxxv. 25, as being composed on the death of the pious king Josiah, and which were perpetuated by "an ordinance in Israel." We agree, however, with those who think that this cannot be the case, whatever may have come of those referred to—and on this account: the evils which Jeremiah had foretold as about to fall on the kingdom of Judah, in the book of Lamentations he deplores as having happened. But, whilst it may readily be allowed that he primarily bewails the calamities from which his countrymen were then suffering, still we are of opinion that they have regard to a future time—to trials yet awaiting them, which have been accomplished since the rejection of the Saviour, which they now endure, but all of which shall pass away for ever, when the scales fall from their eyes, when they see and welcome Jesus the Saviour, and when, with

the bringing in of the Jews, will be the fulness of the Gentiles.

The Book of Lamentations is in reality a song of sorrows. The first two chapters depict the sufferings of the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem; the third deplores the persecutions which Jeremiah himself had been called to undergo; the fourth adverts to the ruin and desolation of the city and Temple, and the misfortunes of Zedekiah; and the fifth is a prayer for his country in its down-trodden condition, and for his countrymen in their sad and suffering state in Babylon. The first four chapters are written in the acrostic style, every verse or couplet beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in regular order. The first and second chapters contain twenty-two verses, according to the number of the letters in the alphabet; the third has triplets, beginning with the same letter; the fourth is like the first two, having twenty-two verses; and the fifth drops the acrostic form, but possesses the same number of verses. It was customary amongst the Jews to embalm the remembrance of kings and distinguished men in songs of lamentation; and also to record the sufferings of families and individuals in like manner, on occasions of public miseries and calamities. Hence, those composed by David on the death of Jonathan and Absalom: so also Isaiah and Ezekiel have left behind them lamentations over the desolations of Egypt, Tyre, and Sidon, which they had foretold: and strange had it been, had Jeremiah, who had predicted, in such dark colours and so frequently, the captivity, and who lived to see it accomplished, not bewailed in the most pathetic and heart-rending terms his country's desolation!

But we must bring our observations on the life, labours, and writings of the prophet to a close. Whatever may be predicated of his style, there can only be one opinion of his laboriousness. He appears to have

been a man of immense industry. His faithfulness, too, was unimpeachable. He shrank from no duty, he feared neither the face nor the frown of prince or monarch. His was a most unthankful task, that of prophesying evil, but he accomplished it. His character, even his enemies being witnesses, was without a stain. Throughout the many years of his arduous calling, and though but a boy when he entered on his work, yet he was kept by the grace of God, and to the glory of his great name. Baruch and he were not only cotemporaries, but constant friends and fellow-labourers. Among the long roll of the illustrious sons of Judah, when the great day of revelation comes, there may be those more distinguished for high intellect and poetical genius, for a sublimer soul, and more flowing diction—but there will be none for devotedness to God, for honesty in the fulfillment of his mission, for attachment to his country, or for love to the best interests of man, superior to Jeremiah, "the weeping prophet."

EZEKIEL,

THE PROPHET OF THE CAPTIVITY.

EZEKIEL AT CHEBAR, IN BABYLON.

All now was desolation in Judea. The time of prophesying of judgments had passed, and the day of their fulfillment had arrived: large portions of the country lay uncultivated, towns and cities hastened to decay, Jerusalem was a heap, and the Temple a ruin—for the captivity had commenced. In point of fact, however, there were four distinct removals of the people into the Babylonish dominions. The first began under king Jehoiakim, when Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, with others, were carried to Babylon; the next when Nebuchadnezzar removed from Jerusalem three thousand and twenty-three of its most useful inhabitants; a third, when Jehoiachin, the prince, with a number of his subjects, were compelled to settle in Babylonia; and the last, when the whole people, as far as they were really valuable as a people, were driven to seek a home in such towns and territories of the Babylonish dominions as were allotted to them. Here they were placed under governors of their own, and had courts of judicature instituted, which decided disputed causes according to their own laws and customs. From this time (A. M. 3416) the seventy years' captivity dates its commencement.

The question has been long discussed, how far we are to consider the removal both of Judah and Israel as having been universal? As to the latter, Josephus says, that all the nation of Israel was taken away, and

their places supplied by the Cutheans; and in the Second Book of the Kings we read of Shalmaneser having carried Israel away into Assyria, and that people were brought from various countries and "placed in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." If we are to take these accounts literally, we must understand no other than that the whole of the people of Israel were removed. This opinion, however, involves immense difficulty. The Israelites are generally believed to have gone first of all to Nineveh. Now, supposing all of them to have been thus transported (at the lowest calculation, about four millions), it is difficult to perceive how they could have been fed, without a miracle being wrought, in passing through Syria and Mesopotamia—a distance of nearly a thousand miles; and, conceiving the exchange of the Cutheans to have been equally sweeping—for any human being to have accomplished this, apart from immediate divine interference, implies a physical, not to say a moral, impossibility. We consider the language more correctly interpreted as referring to the leading and influential portions of both of these nations, numbers being permitted to remain; whilst the countries, from that time, were placed completely under new rulers, and finally, as in the case of the Normans and Saxons in our own land, became largely amalgamated.

This, in reality, was what took place in regard to Judah. The warrior, the priest, the prophet, the scribe, the artisan, the flower of the youth, and the principal inhabitants, were taken away; the others, scattered throughout the country, remained behind. The history of Tobit shows that both the people of Israel and Judah, in the countries where they severally settled, were prominent in every branch of industry, and held positions of eminence and responsibility. In fact, in a conqueror attempting a task of this description, as has been

remarked, his aim must have been to improve his own country. Now this he could only do, not by bringing an untutored rabble into it, expecting them by a word of command to settle down into an orderly and industrious community, but by transporting those who from their habits and callings were sure to be serviceable; and next, by placing them where they were not likely readily to effect a return. Thus acted the king of Babylon towards the Jews; and in like manner so were the people of Israel scattered—settling in multitudes of instances at Nineveh and Shushan, in Ecbatana and Persia, and in other parts of the East. We are therefore of opinion, that, whilst it ought not to be doubted but that many of the descendants of the ten tribes now exist in different parts, still it is useless to expect to find them somewhere a separate and complete nation. Indeed, two and a half of the tribes were removed with the Syrians by Tiglath-pilezer, and the others afterwards by Shalmaneser. Where they at first settled cannot be determined, much less can it be satisfactorily proved where they now dwell. Of this however we are quite sure, that both the remains of the ten tribes, wherever they are, and of the Jews who, since the rejection of Jesus, the Messiah, have been scattered throughout the nations, will yet return to a knowledge of the Lord, and to a saving acquaintance with Christ; and that, whether they are restored or not to their ancient possessions in Canaan (although this we are inclined to believe), still they will share the blessedness and enjoy the triumph of that very religion which their fathers rejected, in the era of its millennial glory.

That division of the captives of Judah with which Ezekiel was immediately connected, was located on the banks of the Chebar, a river of the province of Babylon. The prophet was the son of Busi, of the tribe of Levi, and was himself a priest. He was carried away from

Jerusalem with Jehoiachin. He is believed to have commenced his prophetic ministry in the thirtieth year of his age, and in the fifth year of his captivity, and is supposed to have continued his labours for rather more than twenty years. The main purpose of his efforts was to instruct his countrymen in exile. Even in their punishment, their Lord did not leave them; and whilst they lamented their folly in not listening to Jeremiah, and in not submitting at once, as he entreated them, to the Chaldeans, thus saving themselves and others from many fearful calamities; yet, now that it was too late, God raised up Ezekiel to speak to them even in a distant land, that they might not be altogether without hope. Not only so, but, as many of the predictions of Jeremiah were still far from being realized, he inspires his servant to reiterate them, to reveal others, to denounce the wrath of the Lord against the false prophets and prophetesses who had deluded his people and hardened their hearts in their rebellion—announcing also the punishments awaiting surrounding nations for their hatred of the Jews and their triumph over them in their distress, such as the Ammonites, the Edomites, and the Philistines; the destruction of Tyre and the conquest of Egypt; the restoration of the Jews, and their finally happy state under the government and in possession of the knowledge of the Redeemer.

Such is the burden of Ezekiel's prophecies. A vast variety of opinions has obtained in reference both to his style and genius. Bishop Lowth esteems him as inferior to Jeremiah in elegance, yet not excelled even by Isaiah in sublimity. His sublimity, indeed, he views as of a different order, but of its kind unsurpassed—being more that of the orator than the poet. He is impassioned, rough, full of imagery, always solemn, sometimes stately, often grand, and at times terrific. He pursues his subject with unfailing tenacity to its close. Not that his writings are without poetry—in

some predictions, as we shall see, we have complete poems; but still the style is oratorical. His sentences, however, are ever and again abrupt and unfinished; but they suit his vivid spirit, and fully express his burning thought. Grotius considers Ezekiel, apart from his inspiration, both as a learned writer and a man of genius; his illustrations as apt, his conceptions as beautiful, and his knowledge, especially of architecture, as both minute and extensive. Michaelis dissents from both of these opinions, and considers Ezekiel as rather an imitator than as possessed of original powers, either of conception or style, but as having the art of giving an air of novelty and ingenuity to his compositions—an art, however, be it observed, which is in itself no inconsiderable evidence of the inspiration of genius. In entering upon an analysis of Ezekiel's writings, it will be our aim to drink into the spirit of the prophet, remembering the time and circumstances in which he wrote, and endeavouring to realize the purpose of his varied predictions—gathering up the great lessons which he enforced, the blessed gospel which in banishment he faithfully proclaimed, the comfort in affliction which he administered, a knowledge of the happy future even yet to be realized into which he introduces us, and, amidst the convulsion of kingdoms, the shock of armies, and the horrid sounds of war, endeavour to find comfort with him in the reign of the Prince of Peace.

EZEKIEL'S CALL AND COMMISSION.

Seasons of sorrow have often been occasions of much spiritual refreshing. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. The Lord has often made the martyr to sing on his way to the stake, the prisoner in the dungeon, the patriot in exile, and the Christian in death. Ezekiel was now a captive on the banks of the Chebar. Many

a time has his heart swelled within him as he thought of the days of old, the times of the prosperity of Israel, when Jerusalem was the glory of the earth, the Temple the glory of Jerusalem, and the presence of the Lord the strength and salvation of his people. Now, in captivity, they were left to bewail the departure of Jehovah from them, and to bear both insult and injury from their oppressors. The latter might be borne, heavy as was the calamity; but the former, to the pious Jew, was all but unbearable. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

Of all who thus suffered, none appear to have been more affected than Ezekiel. But, like John, who, centuries afterwards, in the isle of Patmos, found a Sabbath in his solitude, the Spirit of God with him in his exile, and divine comfort in the season of his sorest discipline —so Ezekiel was called to the office of the prophet in his captivity, and was favoured with divine light in the days of his earthly darkness. Wandering by the banks of the Chebar, meditating on the Temple, now desolate and in ruins, of which he was honoured to be a priest, in a moment his attention was arrested by a memorable sight. Coming towards him from the north he heard a novel sound—it was that of a strong yet strange wind. Soon it appeared in view—a mighty whirlwind, in the form of a great cloud. Within the cloud was an infolding fire burning inwards, as if consuming itself; and without, and all around, was brightness, coming forth from the fire and lighting up the cloud with the colour of amber. Ezekiel stood and gazed—struck with astonishment, as he well might be, by the wonderful spectacle. But as he looked, far more astonishing still were the revealings which he witnessed. From amidst the cloud and the fire he saw coming forth the likeness of four living creatures—one having the face of a man; another, that of a lion; a third, that of an ox; and a fourth, that of an eagle. Each living creature had four

faces and four wings—with hands, and feet which were straight, the sole of the foot being like the foot of a calf, but sparkling like burnished brass. They were all activity, each running directly forward, as the spirit which moved them dictated.

This, however, was only part of the vision. As he steadfastly contemplated "the living creatures," instantly he beheld four great wheels—with "wheels within wheels," one by the side of each living creature, with their rings reaching from heaven to earth, and full of eyes, so that the prophet had to speak of them, because of their height, as being "dreadful." The colour which these wheels assumed was that of beryl; and as the living creatures moved, so also the wheels moved, all animated by the same spirit and engaged for the fulfillment of the same distinguished purpose. The wings of the living creatures, two of each, met above their heads, forming an ever-glistering and shifting canopy, whilst over all was a firmament so brilliant that it had the appearance of "the terrible crystal;" above this firmament which was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, formed of a sapphire stone; and one like unto a man sat upon it. The throne itself was encircled with bright light, and arched by a rainbow of transcendent glory. And as the prophet stood and looked at this sublime vision, he informs us that he "fell upon his face"—as well he might; for who could have gazed upon all these wonders, and especially one acquainted with the ways in which God had been wont to reveal himself, without feeling that the Lord was there? He further tells us, confirming his impression of Jehovah's presence, that he "heard a voice of one that spake."

It is scarcely possible to record the various parts of this remarkable revelation afforded to Ezekiel, without feeling that it is full of instruction. Diversity of opinion concerning it there may be; but that it has been so

minutely described merely to stamp the call and commission of Ezekiel to the prophetical office with the impress of divinity, few will affirm. Unquestionably this was the immediate design; but, linked as it is with the history of the Church of God, it could not be the sole intention. We think we can discern in it lessons for all time; encouragement to the most depressed portions of the kingdom of God on earth; and an unchanging ground of confidence for all, in an overruling providence over the affairs of men, as conducted by Immanuel, our Saviour and Lord. The presence of the bright cloud could not fail to indicate, to a priest acquainted with the Shekinah, that it was Jehovah who was revealing himself to him in his captivity. The infolding fire of the cloud, and yet the encircling brightness, was expressive of that presence as made known in a season of trial and difficulty, but not of despair. And that it was God appearing on behalf of his Church in these circumstances is taught by "the living creatures;" as all acquainted with the history of "the chosen people" know, that Israel had as its standards the appearance of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle—the cloud thus connecting itself immediately with Israel, the ancient Church of God, and the type of the visible Church on earth to the close of time. By the wheels, which had within them wheels, the rings of which reached from heaven to earth and were full of eyes, we have the symbol of divine providence, ever watchful of the movements of the Church, and engaged on its behalf. The throne above all, and one like unto a man sitting on it, is the emblem of the sovereignty and government of God, and that as conducted by him who became man, who was the Angel of the Covenant, and who is now the exalted Head of the Church and King of saints. Whilst the voice coming forth, and calling and commissioning Ezekiel, shows how God makes use of human instrumentality for the furtherance of his

kingdom and an extension of the knowledge of his name—at the same time teaching, that the true servants of God are both called and sent by him.

What blessed truths we have here! God's people may suffer captivity—he can appear to them even in Babylon: they may be tried as by fire—there is one like the Son of Man who is with them in the cloud and infolding flame: men and devils may imagine the servants of the Most High, in their days of sorrow and distress, left by God—it is then "the living creatures" are seen coming forth from the fire and the cloud: complicated and mysterious may appear the amazing movements of an overruling providence—not one of them is adverse to the Church, but "the living creatures and the wheels move together:" and, above all, there is the throne of Jesus—the Mediator of the better covenant, exercising absolute control, and choosing whom he will to do his work. What encouragement there is, both for pastors and churches, in this vision of Ezekiel! Happy they who can thus view all events in immediate relation to Christ, to the throne of the Redeemer, and to his kingdom. For the glory of God in the salvation of men does the world continue to exist; and though, in our limited sphere and with our contracted vision, we cannot see how all circumstances, both adverse and prosperous, combine in working out the one supreme will and purpose, yet assuredly they do so, and must continue to do so, till, gathered from all lands, the Son presents to the Father the fruit of his mission, in a redeemed Church of countless myriads of once sinful men, washed in his own atoning blood, clothed in his own perfect righteousness, and sanctified by his truth and Spirit, at last appearing "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Thus out of the cloud of fire will come "the living creatures," winged and willing for ever to engage in the adoration and service of God and the Lamb!

But we return to the voice which Ezekiel heard speaking. It came to him commanding him to stand upon his feet and to receive his appointment. The call of God is connected with a power which is not intended to cast down, but to raise his servants from the earth. Immediately Ezekiel stood up. Yet he was not addressed as an angel or a god, but as a "son of man." The assumption of godlike power by the priesthood has been the bane of the Church and the scourge of the nations—the enemy both of liberty and vital godliness. Nowhere does Jehovah sanction such assumption: his servants are commissioned as men to their fellow men! In the second and third chapters, Ezekiel informs us, how he was sent to the children of Israel; what view God still entertained of them, as stiff-necked and rebellious children, but still children; how he was to speak to them in the name and with the authority of the Lord, and how he was to continue to do so "whether they would hear or whether they would forbear;" that at least they might know that he had given them a prophet in their bondage. As a prophet, however, he is forewarned that his path would be by no means all smooth or his labour all pleasant, but that he would have to walk among briers and thorns, and dwell among scorpions. Still, he is to be without fear—having a brow of adamant, and a face harder than flint, to withstand all who dared to withstand him, proclaiming the words which the Lord should give unto him.

His commission, the rule of it, and the time and manner in which he should be called upon to perform it, Ezekiel has carefully recorded. Under the figure of eating a roll or book, the prophet was taught how entirely what he was to make known to Israel should be revealed to him. And so responsible was he to become in connection with this matter, that if a message of warning against the wicked were given to him and

he did not deliver it, so that they died in their wickedness, their blood was to be required at his hands; whilst if he faithfully proclaimed it to them, but they would not hear, then he was no longer responsible. So also with every communication which he was to make to the righteous. And this rule of prophecy is still binding on the ministers of Christ, rendering their office one of awful moment, for every opportunity of being faithful in which they must account to the Master. Often ought Christian pastors to call to mind the saying, that "it is expected of stewards that they be found faithful." Ezekiel was now sent forth into the plain, to hold communion with God. He instantly obeyed. Once more the same vision, in all its glory, which he had seen on the banks of the Chebar, appeared to him, announcing the presence of the Lord with him. He was commanded to shut himself within his house. He is then informed that at times he would be bound and at other times free—at times detained from going among the people, even as if his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, so that he could not speak; and at other times he should feel the utmost liberty in fulfilling his duty, whether the people listened to his message or not—and this, because the Lord should open his mouth. Boldly was he to proclaim the divine will, when he was summoned to do so; and in the spirit of implicit confidence was he to fulfill his whole mission.

Thus the prophet of the captivity was called and sent. There is something sweetly encouraging in the thought, that while the sins of His people provoke his judgments, yet "mercy is his delight, judgment his strange work." God had been forsaken by Israel, but Israel was not forsaken by God. Their rebellion and idolatry had brought the armies of Babylon into their territory, to destroy their Temple, to take their city, and to seize their lands, as well as to lead them into bondage—idolaters themselves becoming in His hand

the scourge of their idolatry; yet he loves them still. His inspiring Spirit shall render Ezekiel a comfort to them, so that, away from Judah and Jerusalem, they may know that they are not away from the Lord; and whilst the prophet speaks to them of their sinfulness, he tells them also of mercy in store—whilst he condemns their rebellion, he also entreats their return to obedience and the divine blessing. It is well, however, that the people of God should remember, that while he leaves them not to despair, he yet punishes their iniquity—whilst he gives them not up for ever, he nevertheless abandons them to their own hard-heartedness, till they have discovered their folly and sought his forgiveness. Then, no sooner does the prodigal come to his right mind, and begin to return to his father's house, than the waiting, watching father hastens to embrace him. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Even in their captivity in Babylon, the God of love raised up Ezekiel to instruct, rebuke, and encourage his people.

EZEKIEL DENOUNCES JUDGMENT AGAINST THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

We have intimated, in a previous section, that Ezekiel was carried into captivity with Jehoiachin. He was thus in exile for years before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; and though he was far from the spot, still this was not a matter which was hid from the prophet. Indeed, the whole history of the punishment of the Jews as a people, from the time of the defection of Jeroboam till the period of the seizure of Jerusalem and the completion of the captivity, is presented in a vision to the prophet, by the figure of a siege drawn upon a tile or slate. The vision is a remarkable one—revealed to his mind by striking imagery, and its lessons impressed upon his heart by severe suffering. These are the

figures and the facts. In the fourth chapter of his book he informs us that he was commanded to take a tile or slate, to draw upon it a city, to encircle it with a ditch, to describe a mound as erected against it, to represent battering-rams as used against it round about, and to exhibit it as enduring a grievous siege. He was also to take an iron pan and place it as a wall of iron between the city and himself, for his predictions were to be greatly opposed to it. This was to be a sign of the prophet's destructive message to Israel; for it is to be remembered, that after the captivity, the names "Judah" and "Israel" were used indiscriminately for the Jewish people. All this being accomplished, Ezekiel was to lie upon his left side three hundred and ninety days, and upon his right side forty days. He was then to raise his bare arm towards the city and denounce it; and in this state bands were to be put upon him, so that he could not move. Then was he to take meal of the poorest sort—barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet and fitches—and bake them together, on which to subsist during the days in which he had to lie as he had been commanded. All this the prophet did, and fulfilled the desire of the Lord; all of which acts were typical representations of stern realities. These we shall now endeavour to describe.

The siege of the city was a foreshadowing of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the manner of his attack, and the mode in which he was to reduce it to a heap of ruins—in accordance with the description of warfare which obtained in that early age. The wall of iron raised between the prophet and the city was to show that the Lord was against it, because of the sins of the people—even their repeated transgressions and idolatry, which had shut them out from his approbation and benediction. The three hundred and ninety days in which the prophet lay on his left side, were typical of the three hundred and ninety years in which Jehovah

had borne with the transgressions of Israel; and the forty days in which he lay on his right side, of the forty years from the solemn renewal of the covenant by Judah with their Lord, to the destruction of Jerusalem. The poor and scanty supply of food, during these transactions, possessed by the prophet, was intended emphatically to show the hardships which the people of Judah, and especially the inhabitants of Jerusalem, should suffer from the war waged against them by Nebuchadnezzar; whilst the bands put upon the prophet were to exhibit the captivity which they were to undergo, and the trials which in their bonds they were to endure. The same subject is illustrated by another figure in the chapter immediately following. Ezekiel is ordered to shave off the hair of his head and beard—to take portions of it carefully weighed, divided, or numbered—to burn one part in the fire, to cut about another part with a knife, a third to scatter to the winds, and the remainder to consume with fire—all as typical of what was to come upon the people of Jerusalem and Judah, because of turning a deaf ear to the reproof of the Lord, and their obstinate idolatry; the manner in which they should be scattered and peeled, and their utter overthrow. Thus forcibly does the prophet portray the judgments of the Almighty upon his ancient people—a solemn and most instructive warning to the Church in every age!

It is interesting to observe how closely the Lord followed Israel with the voice of admonition, and the message of truth. While Jeremiah is faithfully unfolding coming events both to the princes and people in Judah, Ezekiel as faithfully announces them to his exiled countrymen by the rivers of Babylon; and as if he were on the very spot, and vividly affected by the idolatrous altars erected in the groves and on the mountains of his native land, so does he address them and proclaim woe against those who worshipped at

them. Yet, lost as Judah was, Ezekiel is not allowed to suppose that all in it were alike sunk in corruption. He discovers a faithful few, a remnant yet witnessing for truth. His pious and patriotic heart kindles with affection towards them, and he calls upon them to be constant and bewail their country's desolation. That destruction, as finally accomplished, he describes in the sixth chapter. Even they who witness it, but escape, undergo a mournful repentance. Because of the iniquities of Israel, the very holy places and consecrated utensils the heathen are permitted to defile. One calamity follows another, "till all hands become feeble, all knees weak as water; till the people gird themselves with sackcloth, and amazement overtakes them; till shame covers their faces, and baldness is upon their heads; till all things are possessed by the strangers as a prey, and by the wicked as a spoil, and they pollute them." And under the figure of a chain, again the captivity is symbolized, and that amidst complete desolation; their enemies taking possession of their homes, their lands, and their holy places, causing lamentation and woe throughout the length and breadth of the country.

Far distant from "the holy city," Ezekiel remains not uninstructed in the actual state of society in it. In vision he is transported within its precincts to witness its condition, and in the eighth and succeeding chapters he presents us with some most appalling details. He enters the Temple; sees erected there the image of the false god, Baal, which by a strong figure he designates "the image of Jealousy," from the provocation which it occasioned to Jehovah, and the base affection with which it was regarded by the people; he beholds the idolatry both of the elders and people carried thus into the very sanctuary of the Most High; he gazes with horror upon the superstitions of Egypt, Phœnicia, and Persia, as practised in the once chosen abode of

the God of glory; witnesses the Shekinah departing, and the merited doom of Jerusalem approaching. His lips are opened—he can no longer keep silence, and, in language such as the wicked may at the last day expect to hear coming from the throne of judgment, he thunders denunciations against the rulers and people for their fearful wickedness, in opposition to the instructions of God's inspired prophets. Their destruction is foretold by a vision of coals of fire scattered over the city—a terrible anathema. He had seen, he had heard, he knew, enough to awaken all but despair. But, no, the stars shine in the night—the dawn comes forth from the darkness. With Ezekiel it is not all sin and woe: Satan must not reign undisturbed, or his sway continue undisputed; a remnant still remains. Once more the cherubim and living creatures cheer him, and he is permitted to comfort himself with animating glimpses of the restoration from captivity. In spirit he returns again to the banks of the Chebar, and reveals to his brethren there all that he had witnessed.

Ezekiel, more than any of the prophets of the Lord, was made to foretell coming events by representations. Whether he was not permitted freely to announce them to his countrymen in Babylon—whether he did not feel at liberty to make known before the enemies of his country all that they were to have power to inflict upon its inhabitants—or whether the people required in the most impressive form to have their attention drawn to a consideration of the doings of the Lord with them—each conjecture likely to be true, but the latter more especially so—still, so it was, that "the prophet of the captivity" taught the captives in Babylon very much by literal transactions. In the twelfth chapter, by the command of God, he removes all his household furniture, through a hole dug in the wall of his house; and this he does in haste and in the sight of all, as if driven by force to it—and that in order to reiterate the cer-

tainty and suddenness of the captivity which was approaching to the rest of their countrymen. Here Ezekiel gives the prediction about king Zedekiah to which reference has been made in explaining Jeremiah's prophecy concerning him. Jeremiah had said that he should see with his eyes the king of Babylon, and should be carried away captive by him, yet should not see him. Ezekiel predicts his arrival in Babylon—and that he should die there, yet should not see it. This, we have elsewhere observed, was literally fulfilled. When Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Babylonians, and king Zedekiah attempted to escape by night, being pursued he was overtaken in the plains of Jericho, whence he was carried with his family to Nebuchadnezzar, at Riblah, in Syria, who accused him of treachery, caused his children to be slain before him, and afterwards ordered his eyes to be put out. Thus he spared his life, sending him into captivity; but proving that "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

In a vast variety of forms, Ezekiel repeats the judgments of the Lord against Judah and the false prophets of his country; as if, by an accumulation of different similes, every diversity of mind and character might be affected. The very forbearance of God is abused and turned into a proverb by them, so perverse and depraved is the human heart; but the prophet is sent to declare that their perversion shall be punished, and their proverb cease. The false prophets and prophetesses to whom they so greedily gave heed, because they predicted smooth things, the Lord reproves by the lips of his servant, exposing their unfounded declarations—their attempt to buoy up the hearts of the people with false hopes, which Ezekiel denounces as building with "untempered mortar;" so also the flattering words of the false prophetesses, which he exposes as "seducing pillows." By no figure is the healthfulness and piety

of the people of God more frequently represented than by a fruitful vine, or their sinfulness and rejection than by a wild and worthless one. This might have been expected of those whose every association in the countries where they lived, even from their earliest days, was connected with vineyards. Ezekiel, with the other prophets, uses this illustration on different occasions, setting forth the utter uselessness, nay, evil character, of those who ought to have been to the divine praise and honour—not cumberers of the ground, but the bearers of precious fruit. And why not? Had they not been tended and cared for, trained and pruned? Like a helpless infant, which has been exposed by its own parents and deserted by them—which has been adopted by a loving and sympathizing heart, brought by such an one into his own house, reared with the most tender care and assiduity, and finally made the wife of his own bosom—but who, after all this affection and kindness, proves ungrateful and faithless—so does the prophet represent the Lord as adopting Israel, when poor, enslaved, and despised—choosing them as his own people, and caring for them—marrying them to himself in a holy covenant, loading them with unparalleled favours, and protecting them with almighty power: and yet they deserted him who had thus fostered them—who had been to them as a husband, a father, and an unchanging friend. With amazing power does Ezekiel depict this loving-kindness of God to his people, and their ingratitude, reiterating the sin of their grievous spiritual adultery in serving false gods. And, oh, what sin it is, the withdrawal, even for a moment, of our supreme affection from Him who alone has the best right to it!

Some of the most minute events which were to occur in the progress of providence, leading to the Babylonish captivity, our prophet carefully though figuratively reveals. Thus, two circumstances of note

are announced in the seventeenth chapter, under the allegory of two eagles, in connection with the vine to which we have referred. The vine, as we have intimated, is Judah. The one eagle, described as having great and long wings, with feathers of various colours, comes and crops the top twigs, the young branches of the vine, as also of the cedars of Lebanon, and gathers the seed, carrying them away, to plant them in a country of much merchandise—a land of fertility. The other eagle also comes; but towards him both the roots and branches of the vine are described as bending; as if soliciting him to tend, to water, to protect them. These eagles represent, the one the king of Babylon, with the vast and varied countries and castes of men constituting his empire, and the other the king of Egypt: and regards the former, when he came and seized upon Jehoiakim, because of his revolt, leading him into captivity, with many who were both the flower and strength of the country; and the latter, when an alliance was sought with him by Zedekiah, in order to his own and his people's protection from Chaldean usurpation; and thus both the roots and branches, the high and the low, are described as turning towards him. On account of this alliance, the king is threatened with immediate bondage, as well as with personal and family punishment—all of which, we have seen, in the most affecting circumstances actually occurred. But all is not to be judgment, and that always. On the contrary, the preaching of the gospel, the spread of divine truth, and the universal establishment of Messiah's kingdom, is foretold, rendering this chapter a seriously instructive yet deeply interesting study.

The vindication of the justice of Jehovah engages the attention and affords scope for the ingenuity of Ezekiel, in the eighteenth chapter. He informs us of the divine mode of dealing with both parents and children, and shows how the sins of the fathers are

visited upon the children. He narrates how God deals with a just father, with the wicked son of a pious parent, with the good child of an ungodly parent, with a wicked man repenting, and with a good man revolting. He makes plain how the Just One, in all such cases, acts justly; whilst if they repent—and the appeal is, "Why will ye die?"—then his mercy meets his justice, and both unite to save. For, "saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore, turn yourselves, and live." Not only so, but lamentation is coupled with appeal, in the succeeding chapter. This takes place over the princes of Israel, whose mother is represented as a lioness, and her offspring as lion's whelps. One after the other grows up and devours his prey; and are themselves in turn destroyed or bound. Nay, even their mother—the people of their care—the nation of their nativity and rule, the figure being changed once more to a vine—is uprooted and planted far away in a wilderness, in a dry and thirsty soil, and that which was once so fair and fruitful, now becomes wild and useless, even to a lamentation. Nor does the occasion of sorrow end here. In the twentieth chapter the very elders of the people, who desire to come and inquire before the Lord, are rejected; and this with a most painful recapitulation of all the rebellion of their fathers, from the day of their leaving Egypt down to their own idolatry and dishonour. A dark page this recapitulation is, in whatever point of view it is considered—especially when the love and fatherly care of the Lord over Israel are remembered, and their ingratitude, so unreasonable and even base, is duly understood. The remaining portion of the condemnatory predictions of Ezekiel against his country, from the twentieth to the end of the twenty-fourth chapter, contains a catalogue of sins on the one hand and of punishments on the other. The former consist of the most unblushing idolatry and abominable

adultery, and the latter of the most unsparing judgments against the guilty. So great are their sins, that all Jerusalem is represented as dedicated to idols, from the prince and priest to the lowest of the people; and both Jerusalem and Samaria are held up to scorn for their profligacy, both in their religious and common life, by being compared to two harlots. No wonder that the ire of the prophet's spirit was kindled, and his whole soul set on flame, and that he should struggle to find imagery strong and expressive enough by which to make known God's wrath. He likens Jerusalem to a forest, doomed to be consumed by fire; he witnesses the anger of the Lord under the emblem of a bright, sharp, and glistening sword; and by the figure of a boiling pot he is shown the character of their destruction and overthrow. And so grievous is the mourning of his spirit over all these things at hand, that though his own wife had died, who had been to him "as the desire of his eyes," yet he is forbidden to bewail her end, in the remembrance of his country's wrong-doing and punishment.

Never, perhaps, in the history of prophetic announcement, might the word "burden" be more appropriately applied, than to this section of Ezekiel's prophecies. By far the greater part of it contains messages of unmitigated condemnation. The scenes that were still disgracing Judah, the absence of a right spirit both among high and low in the land, the disregard of the living and true God by all classes, and their universal abandonment to sin, might well grieve the heart of the prophet, and add weight and force to his anathemas. Yet his love of country everywhere pierces the gloom, his hope of better times bears him beyond all its present prostration and misery, the years of the restoration loom in sight like a vessel freighted with a full supply to a land of want, and the days of the Messiah and the glory of his coming kingdom gladden his downcast soul, even

as the prospect of heaven cheers the traveller "through the valley of the shadow of death." But the denunciatory predictions of Ezekiel do not close here; a large section follows. Still these are directed, not against Judah, but the neighbouring nations, because of their rejoicing over Judah's desolation. Then come strains of comfort for Israel—animating promises of both a national restoration and spiritual revival—till, wrapped in the vision of a more perfect Temple than that of Solomon, a more glorious city than Jerusalem, and a more illustrious country than that of Canaan, Ezekiel discerns the one Temple of the true Church, "the new Jerusalem," and "the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." In this blessed future, yet awaiting the saved from among men, well may the spirit of the prophet find rest.

EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES AGAINST JUDAH'S ENEMIES.

However much it may please God to punish his own people, to show them the evil of sin, and to teach them that there is no security but in his service—at the same time, it is no part of his purpose that their enemies should rejoice in their calamities or glory in their overthrow. It is rather his desire that they should learn by their disasters, and that they should stand in awe of his power and justice. That he loves his own people—that in all ages they have been the subjects of his special protection and mercy—their history abundantly proves, even their enemies being witnesses. But will his parental care be partial, and his affection overlook their sins? No; they are "chosen" in the exercise of his sovereign equity as well as love, and are "called" in order to engage in his service. Love leads to the punishment of transgression, as much as justice. Nothing can be more ruinous than to allow a child to run on in a course of evil unchecked. No loving, right-minded

parent could be guilty of such a manifest dereliction of duty. At the same time, he will not permit others to conclude that the discipline of his child in such circumstances originates in a withdrawal of his affections, instead of a holy and wise exercise of them. Hence, for others to follow up such parental punishment with contempt and contumely, is the sure way to make the love of the parent instantly take part with the wounded and insulted child, and treat his enemies as their common foes. And in truth this is what literally occurred in the history of Judah, during the years of their captivity. The surrounding nations prided themselves in their misfortunes, and laughed at their discomfiture. Such inhumanity could not be overlooked. The prophets are inspired to foretell the judgments which should speedily overtake them also. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel denounce by name those nations, and specify the character of the inflictions which they should be called upon to endure. We have already referred to the predictions of the two former of these, and may have occasion again to remind our readers of several of the more prominent of them, in giving our account of those mentioned by Ezekiel, and which are contained in that section of his prophecies beginning at the twenty-fifth chapter and closing with the thirty-second.

The first of the prophecies pronounced over the enemies of Judah by Ezekiel, is directed against the Ammonites. It may be necessary, in order rightly to appreciate his prediction against them, to recall a portion of their history. They are generally admitted to be the descendants of Ammon or Benammi, a son of Lot. Their country lay to the south-east of Judea, which they took from that "ancient race of giants" called the Zamzummim. Their territory extended from the Arnon to the Jabbok, and from the Jordan a considerable distance into Arabia. Their capital city was Rabbah, situated on the banks of the Jabbok. They

were gross idolaters, their chief idol being Moloch. At various times they greatly annoyed and oppressed Israel. On one occasion, joining with Eglon, king of Moab, they attacked the Israelites, conquered them, and rendered them tributary for eighteen years, till Jephthah was raised up as a deliverer. In the beginning of Saul's reign, Nahash, king of the Ammonites, marched against Jabesh-gilead, reducing it to capitulation, and would accept of no other conditions than that of the inhabitants submitting to have the right eye of every man plucked out, as a reproach to Israel. But Saul, coming seasonably to their aid, saved the people from this intended barbarity. About sixty years afterwards, when David, who had formerly been on friendly terms with the king of Ammon, sent ambassadors with letters of condolence, on the death of the father, to Hanun, his son and successor, they were regarded as spies, and treated in the most degrading manner. He however avenged the insult, and subdued the Ammonites—with the Moabites and Syrians, their allies. For a hundred and forty years from this time, they were subject to the kings of Israel. After the death of Ahab they rebelled, but two years afterwards were defeated by Jehoram. Still they continued to annoy Israel, and, in conjunction with the Moabites and others, they made an irruption into Judah; but, as Jahaziel had foretold, the combined army was destroyed by mutual slaughter. No sooner had the captivity commenced, and Tiglath-pileser had removed the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, than they entered and took possession of their cities. For this Jeremiah predicted sore judgments against them. (Jer. xlix. 1–6.) Now their cup becomes full. Great as had been their previous wickedness, it was fearfully aggravated by their insolent triumph over the Israelites, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. For this, Ezekiel stands forth at God's bidding, to predict that they should them-

selves be delivered into the hands of the men of the East—that Rabbah, their chief city, should become a stable for camels—that their country should become a couching-place for flocks—and that they should be carried away captive, and as a nation be obliterated. The former part of this prophecy was fulfilled about four years afterwards, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered all the countries around Judea; and the latter part met its accomplishment in the days of Judas Maccabeus, when they were completely overpowered, and when those that remained blended with the Arabs, so that ever since they have been known under this common appellation.

The Moabites are next particularized by Ezekiel, and their end predicted. Their history is soon told. They were the descendants of Moab, another of the sons of Lot. The country which they inhabited lay to the east of the Jordan, adjacent to the Dead Sea, and on both sides of the river Arnon, which gave the name of Ar, Ariel, or Ariopolis, to their capital city. The land had formerly been possessed by the Emim, whom they conquered and drove out before them. The Moabites were spared by Moses, according to the command of Jehovah; but it was ordained that none of them should be permitted to enter the Temple or hold office in Judah, even to the tenth generation, because of their inhumanity in refusing to let Israel march through their land, or to obtain bread or water in their necessity. There was always a great antipathy between the Israelites and the Moabites, which often occasioned war between them. Eglon, king of Moab, was one of the first to oppress Israel, after the death of Joshua. He was slain by Ehud. During the days of Balaam, the Israelites were seduced to idolatry and grievous sin by the daughters of Moab. With the Ammonites, the country of Moab was made tributary to Israel by David, and continued so to the death of

Ahab. We have seen that both nations were reconquered by Jehoram. After this period, Isaiah, Amos, and Ezekiel all foretell heavy calamities as awaiting them, and especially because of their rejoicing over prostrate Judah. Some think that they suffered these disasters during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, kings of Judah; others, at the hands of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; and others—and with them we are agreed—in the war with Nebuchadnezzar, five years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

With the Moabites and Ammonites our prophet ranks the Edomites and the Philistines, predicting their overthrow. We have already had occasion to record the history of the Philistines, those inveterate enemies of God's people for many ages, in our memoir of "the royal prophet." The Edomites, the inhabitants of Idumea (to use the title given by the Greeks to their land), were, as their name implies, the descendants of Edom or Esau, the elder brother of Jacob. Their country extended originally from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf of the Red Sea; and afterwards more to the south of Judah, towards Hebron. The capital of East Idumea was Bozra; that of South Edom was Petra, or Jectael. They were governed for a time by dukes or princes, but afterwards by kings. They existed as an independent people to the days of David, when they also became tributary to Israel, in completion of Isaac's prophecy, that Jacob should rule Esau. Partially, this subjection ceased at the end of Solomon's reign, when Hadad, the Edomite, who had been carried away in his childhood into Egypt, had returned and become king of Edom. Most probably, however, his rule extended only over East Edom, as we find the other parts of Idumea tributary to Judah down to the days of Jehoram, against whom they rebelled. Amaziah, during his reign, took Petra, killing ten thousand men, and compelling ten thousand more to leap from

the rock on which the city of Petra was built. (2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12.) Such was the cruel character of war, as practised in former ages; and now, we fear, it is not less, but even more, destructive. These victories, as they were esteemed, did not produce a permanent subjection. The Idumeans joined Nebuchadnezzar in his attack upon Jerusalem; but, as our prophet foretold, about the same time with those of Moab, their country was overrun by the armies of Babylon, and the people led away captive. So also was the vengeance of the Most High poured out upon the Philistines, who, long afterwards, became subject to Persia. Ultimately, those of Edom were amalgamated with the Ishmaelites, and were conjointly called Nabatheans, from Nabath, a son of Ishmael.

We are now brought by Ezekiel to a consideration of the rise and fall of one of the most noted commercial cities of antiquity—the city of Tyre. Who founded it has not been recorded. Enough, however, of its history exists, to show that from a very early period it occupied a distinguished place among the nations. It appears to have been the very centre and seat of early commerce, the mistress of the seas, and the market of the world. Tyre was situated in Phœnicia, in that portion of it allotted by Moses to the tribe of Asher, but the Canaanitish inhabitants of which they appear never to have expelled. Tyre consisted of two townships—insular Tyre, and Palae Tyrus, or Tyre on the continent. The latter appears to have been by far the most ancient portion of the city. Indeed, it has been maintained, by some writers, that the island part of Tyre was not erected until after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. This, however, is completely at variance with the accounts which Isaiah and Ezekiel have given of the city, both speaking of it in relation to its insular character. Some have thought that Tyre had no existence in the days of Joshua. Hence it is alleged that

Homer mentions Sidon, but not Tyre; and Josephus is quoted as intimating that it was founded about 240 years before the building of the Temple by Solomon, which would be 200 years after the time of Joshua. Still, this version can scarcely be accepted as the correct one. Though Homer may not speak of it, yet this city must have existed in his time, for in the days of Solomon we read of a king of Tyre; nor can we doubt but this is the same place which is mentioned by Joshua himself as "the strong city Tyre" (Joshua xix. 29); while the priority which is constantly given in the Scriptures to it—the language being "Tyre and Sidon" —and the fact that the latter was often tributary to the former, sufficiently indicate its importance as well as antiquity.

Continental Tyre, we have intimated, was the most ancient part of the city; it was also the most wealthy. It commanded an extensive line of sea coast. But as it grew in influence and increased in riches, gradually the island lying near to it presented a favourable opportunity of rendering it all but impregnable—an opportunity which its spirited inhabitants did not overlook. The island was built upon, fortifications were erected, and it became "strong in the sea." Thus Tyre stood partly on a continent and partly on an island. The power which it thus possessed soon raised it to importance. Merchants flocked to it from all quarters, ships sailed to it from all shores, merchandise was brought into it from all lands, and the produce of the nations passed through it—rendering it, in the language of the prophet, "a mart for the people of many isles." Some idea of the enterprise of its merchants may be formed from the account which Ezekiel gives of the magnificence of their vessels. Its ships, says he, were built of the famous fir trees of Senir, their masts of the lofty cedars of Lebanon, their oars of the sturdy oaks of Bashan, their hatchways of the costly ivory brought from

the isles of Chittim, their sails of fine linen, with broidered work, from Egypt; they were lined with cloth of purple and scarlet from the isles of Elishah; sailors from Sidon and Arvad manned them, and pilots, educated on purpose at Tyre, steered them. No expense appears to have been spared in the construction of these ancient galleys; and beautiful, as far as they went, they must have been.

This city had now reached its highest prosperity. She sat as a queen over the far-stretching ocean. Her builders had perfected her beauty; and in her pride she said, "I am unparalleled." But "pride cometh before a fall." Tyre had rejoiced over Israel's ruin; now her own drew nigh. She had said of Judah, "I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste." Alas! her own overthrow must become a "terror." In the time of Isaiah, Tyre was attacked by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, with a fleet of sixty ships, with eight hundred rowers; but the Tyrians, with only twelve ships, obtained the victory, dispersed the Assyrians, and took five hundred prisoners. This expedition is supposed to have been undertaken in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah. About this time Isaiah predicted the destruction of Tyre, but not by the enemy then attacking it, but by the Chaldeans, a people "formerly of no account." A hundred and twenty years later, Ezekiel foretells yet more specifically their approaching destruction. Still, they were in the midst of their success. Judah is no longer the occasion of trouble to Babylon. Her victorious armies may march on other lands. The sons of Ammon are at their feet; Moab is their washpot; Edom has been laid waste; and now mighty Babylon must lower the pride of "the mistress of the seas." Aware that they could do nothing against Tyre by water, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar are marched to encompass the city by land. This took place about two years after the complete captivity of the Jews.

Thirteen years they lay before the city, when it fell. Then all its inhabitants were either put to the sword or led into captivity; its walls were razed to the ground, and its overthrow was complete. Continental Tyre from this time continued a ruin; insular Tyre, long afterwards, was rebuilt and flourished. It was then attacked by Alexander the Great, and taken after a siege of eight months. With the ruins of old Tyre, Alexander constructed a gigantic mole, two hundred feet in breadth, and connected the island with the land, a distance of three quarters of a mile. The city does not appear to have altogether lost its influence from this time—as, only thirty years later, we find it an object of contention to Alexander's successors. Its history, from this period, becomes identical with that of Syria. Early Christianity found its way into Tyre. William of Tyre, the well known historian, its first archbishop, was an Englishman. Fully has Ezekiel's prophecy been accomplished concerning this city. For many centuries it has been a poor village; it now begins to lift up its head, and has become a place of larger trade; but it is never likely to rise to any great importance. Indeed, Ezekiel says of it, "thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." Well may our own sea-girt island learn lessons of humility, gratitude, and confidence in God alone, from the history of the rise and fall of ancient Tyre.

It was not likely, when Tyre was doomed, that Sidon would escape. Both were cities of much of the same order of inhabitants—liable, from the influx of the thoughtless and the worldly from all parts, to the same temptations—alike given to idolatry, (Ashtaroth being emphatically styled "the goddess of Sidon,") and both equally opposed to Judah. The city of Sidon has been esteemed one of the most ancient in the world. It is spoken of as existing in the days of Jacob, and is referred to by him in his dying blessing pronounced upon

Zebulon. (Gen. xlix. 13.) Sidon, the eldest son of Canaan, is generally esteemed the founder of this city, which so long bore his name. It was situated, like Tyre, on the shores of the Mediterranean, in the country of Phœnicia, and to the north of Tyre and Sarepta. As were the Tyrians, so were the Sidonians celebrated for their trade and commerce, their enterprise and wealth. This city was also part of the lot of Asher. For a long time it was governed by its own kings; though, as we have mentioned, at different periods tributary to Tyre. Painful are the judgments which Ezekiel pronounced against Sidon; nor did one of them fail of being accomplished. The Babylonians besieged and took it, and during the siege many of its inhabitants perished of pestilence. It was not, however, entirely destroyed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, but again rose to influence and importance. Afterwards it suffered from the Egyptians, the Seleucidæ, and finally the Romans. Christianity was early planted in this city. Our Lord himself visited the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. It is now, like most other of the Turkish towns in Syria, a place of filth and ruins. Its trade nevertheless is considerable, and its inhabitants still number about ten thousand.

But what pen can ever sketch the touching and terrible, the sublime yet solemn predictions of Ezekiel, as spoken against Egypt? Among all the countries of antiquity, none occupies a more prominent or interesting place in connection with Israel than that of Egypt. In it Joseph found both a prison and a palace, and the blessed Jesus a place of refuge in the days of his infancy. In a sense it was the birth-place of the chosen people of God. They were only a few families when they went to settle in Goshen, but came forth from it numbering more than two millions. But they learned strange lessons of idolatry in Egypt, from which it was very difficult to rescue them. Many indeed were the alliances

which from time to time the Israelites and the Egyptians formed, though seldom did the latter prove faithful to the former. When therefore Jehovah was announcing to the world his judgments against the enemies of Israel, it was not likely that Egypt would be overlooked. Nor was it. In a series of denunciations the most minute, remarkable, and soul-stirring, our prophet proclaims God's estimate of this land and its merited punishment.

The history of Egypt is replete with interest and instruction. It is one of the first and most famous countries of which we read. In Scripture it is designated Mizraim, or the land of Ham. It was first inhabited by the descendants of Ham, the son of Noah. Mizraim was a son of Ham. The origin of the name "Egypt" is disputed. Some derive it from Egyptus, an ancient king of the land, a son of Belus; others maintain that this was the early name of the Nile, and that the country on its banks was so called from it; and others consider it as originating in the phrase "aia Cophti," the land of Cophti, as used by the Egyptians themselves, and their neighbours the Arabians. But whatever difficulty there may be in regard to the name, all are agreed as to the early importance and distinction of the country. Egypt was originally divided into forty-two nomes or provinces, and also into Upper and Lower Egypt. The capital of Upper Egypt was Thebes, and extended southward to the frontiers of Ethiopia; Lower Egypt contained principally the Delta, and the country on the coast of the Mediterranean. The Arabians called Lower Egypt, Rib or Rahab, which is mentioned in Psalm lxxxvii. 4; Upper Egypt, Sais or Thebais; and the part between, which lay in the vicinity of the Red Sea, Souf—the name given to the Red Sea by Moses. Herodotus refers to a two-fold division of Egypt—the one belonging to Libya, and the other to Asia; and the same division appears in Ibn Haukal, who says, "the left side of the Nile is called Khouf, and the right side Zeif;" or, as we

would say, Eastern and Western Egypt. We mention this in order to a right understanding of Ezekiel's prophecy, which says, "I will make the land of Egypt waste from the tower of Syene to the border of Cush"—meaning Cush on the Red Sea; so that this threat is to be viewed as referring to Eastern Egypt, the tower of Syene having stood opposite the Island of Elephantina, and "the borders of Cush" meaning from this point all up the Red Sea to Suez. Hence also of this division of the country, after the taking of it by Nebuchadnezzar, there is confirmatory evidence in the language—"no foot of man or beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years." Now, of no other part but of Eastern Egypt can it be said that this prediction was fulfilled.

Egypt has been very properly called "the great academy of the earlier ages." To it the philosophers both of Greece and Rome repaired, to drink of the streams of its knowledge. It is recorded to the commendation of Moses himself, that "he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" and the highest eulogium pronounced upon the wisdom of Solomon is, that "it excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Kings iv. 30). But, with all its greatness and learned distinction, having no acquaintance with the true God and his holy service, Egypt was from the first a sinful land, and as such a fearful source of corruption in the world. From it sprang the polytheism of several of the eastern and most of the western nations; and so degenerate did it at last become, and so low and loathsome was its idolatry, that its inhabitants sacrificed to "the cattle and creeping things of the earth;" so that it has scarcely left its parallel in degradation on the pages of history. Nor was their cruelty a whit behind their corruption; indeed, they are ever linked together. What can surpass the grinding slavery which Israel

endured, or the treachery of the Egyptians often afterwards displayed? Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem, and plundered it. Often did they disregard their alliance with God's people; and when both Israel and Judah were led into captivity, Egypt rejoiced over their overthrow—a short-lived joy, however, as Ezekiel most forcibly portrays.

To such an extent of power and influence had Egypt reached, that the prophet represents its arrogant and impious sovereign as "the great dragon, or crocodile, that lieth in the midst of the waters, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself;" and in accordance with this statement, Herodotus informs us that the king of Egypt proudly and wickedly boasted, that "it was not in the power of any god to dispossess him of his throne." But the prophets of the Lord spake against the strong land, and soon its strength was scattered like ashes. Jeremiah predicted—"Behold, I will give Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies, and into the hands of them that seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah, king of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life." Ezekiel in like manner foretold—"I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste." In harmony with this sure word of prophecy, we read of several memorable revolutions which occurred in Egypt. The first was that occasioned by Nebuchadnezzar, at the time to which we have been referring, when his victorious armies marched, like the hosts of death, over all the cities and kingdoms situated on the shores of the Mediterranean; the next was that by Cambyses and the Persians, who invaded and subdued the land; and the third was that by Alexander the Great, who subverted the Persian rule in Egypt as elsewhere, founded the city of Alexandria, and brought many Jews out of

captivity to settle there and in other parts of Egypt, till during his reign literally was fulfilled the language of Isaiah, "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan." But there is one portion of Ezekiel's prophecy against Egypt which describes, in a small compass, its fate from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to our own time, and which we cannot refrain from transcribing. He says, "It shall be a base kingdom. I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked, and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt." And what is the testimony of travellers to the truth of the prophet's declarations? "Deprived," says Volney, "three-and-twenty centuries ago, of her natural proprietors, she has seen her fertile fields successively a prey to the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Georgians, and at length to the race of Tartars, distinguished by the name of Ottoman Turks." "It has," says Niebuhr, "enjoyed no interval of tranquillity and freedom, but has been constantly oppressed and pillaged by the lieutenants of a distant lord, who have scarcely left the people the bare means of subsistence."

Who can contemplate the fulfillment of a prophecy like this, without feeling how truly "the Lord reigneth" over the nations? Men and kingdoms are alike under his control. What remarkable announcements those, by our prophets, against the enemies of Israel!—and yet not one of them failed. Truly the word of the Lord is a sure word. He raises up kings, and lays them low again; he founds dynasties, then causes them to fall; he establishes kingdoms, and again he scatters them. The kingdoms of the earth are all in the hands of the Lord; but among them there is only one which he establishes for ever. All the others exist for this one kingdom's sake. The true Israel shall never perish. "The stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall

fill the whole earth." The kingdoms of the world must become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Blessed are they who belong to "this Israel of the Lord," who are the subjects of his spiritual kingdom, the children of his family—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, his beloved Son. O that nothing may satisfy us, short of this relation to the Saviour!

EZEKIEL, A PROPHET OF CONSOLATION.

The whole of the remaining predictions of Ezekiel, from the commencement of the thirty-third chapter to the close of his book, consist of cheering announcements of restoration, peace, and prosperity. The darkness is past, and the morning light has come. Indeed, it was a very important part of the prophet's mission, after having announced the judgments yet to be inflicted upon Judah and the surrounding countries, to console the people of God in the years of their captivity. Having completed and enforced his predictions of divine vengeance, with what an eager, bounding, happy spirit does he now enter upon this joyous portion of his labours! He begins by describing what a watchman ought to be—how he ought to enjoin repentance, to vindicate the divine equity in the punishment of transgression, to declare the Most High to be no respecter of persons, and to proclaim the certainty of suffering as awaiting the impenitent. While he thus describes the mission both of the prophet and pastor in the Church, tidings reach him of the fall of Jerusalem. And now, lest the remaining inhabitants should consider the trial ended and themselves secure, he informs them of the utter desolation of the whole land. Deep and loud are his denunciations of the rulers and instructors of the people, whom he addresses as shepherds, because of their selfishness, in regarding the fleece but not the flock—in feeding themselves, but starving others; an awful

sin—one repeatedly regarded by the prophets as a most striking evidence of the approaching downfall of a nation or decay of a church, and one against which all who are interested in the welfare of humanity and the glory of God ought continually to guard. Happy the churches which are blessed with faithful pastors; and blessed is the nation which has in its bosom ministers and churches alive to the work of redemption!

From the faithless shepherds, Ezekiel turns to the times and triumphs of Messiah, the Good Shepherd. In a magnificent picture, he displays the glory of his reign. He sees him searching out and bringing in his flock, gathering them from all countries, and leading them from the barren desert and dark day into rich pastures and marvellous light. He beholds him calling them, feeding them, and in safety making them to rest. Everywhere he witnesses the earth yielding its increase, the fields rejoicing in abundance, the trees covered with fruit, the mountains clothed with rich pasture, and valley and hill, basking under the bright sunshine, studded with flocks. Between all parties, Jesus is the judge and his truth the law. His people are no longer the prey of the heathen; he has established his covenant of peace, and all the places are made glad around the hill of Zion. The plant of renown has been raised up, and plenty, instead of spiritual famine, now blesses the nations. The Lord hastens to become their God, the inhabitants of all lands his people; and the time dawns before the joyous eyes of the prophet, of one flock and one shepherd throughout the world—the dawn of a day, indeed, which has yet to reach its meridian: but it will come, the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; and the earth may pass away, and the heavens be rolled up as a scroll, but the word of the Lord standeth sure for ever. Let the Church of the living God abide in perfect confidence concerning

this, and labour knowing that her "labour is not in vain in the Lord."

In the thirty-fifth chapter Ezekiel reiterates judgment against Seir or Edom; and in the two following chapters he announces the general restoration of the Jews and their consequent felicity. This is represented in the thirty-sixth chapter as a matter of great glory, and worthy of boundless gratitude—and that because they had suffered through their own sinfulness, and were to be restored apart altogether from their deserts. The vision of the valley of dry bones is contained in the thirty-seventh chapter, and a most instructive vision it is. Doubtless it had primary reference to the state of the Jews at the time of their captivity, when, through their idolatry and evil practices, they were as good as dead in regard to the service of their Lord, and could only be raised up by the life-giving Spirit of the Most High. We consider, however, that it is most appropriately applied to the condition both of the individual sinner and of the whole world of the wicked, apart from the word and life of the gospel. For what is the world, viewed religiously, but a valley of dry bones—a valley which spiritual corruption and death have been turning into a far-spreading cemetery? And how vast it is, how desolate, how deathly—the bones, how dry! No mortal arm can create a land of life out of that valley of death. But, behold! God can do it. He appoints; and the means he uses, and these only, can succeed. Go, son of man—for angels are not commissioned to preach, but men—speak in that valley of dry bones! Know, preaching effects nothing of itself. Pray also, and let your prayer be, that the Holy Spirit may accompany the word; and death will give place to life, chaos to order, darkness to light, corruption and misery to beauty and blessedness. Preach and pray; and, hark! the wind comes, the Spirit does not tarry —the living breath accompanies the living voice, pro-

claiming God's revealed will. The vision is changed: the valley is no longer a loathsome grave-yard, but a pleasant garden, full of living, loving, holy, and happy men. Such is the mission of the gospel of Christ, till this death-smitten world of ours becomes "Paradise regained."

The armies gather. The restoration of this world to its rightful owner cannot be expected to take place without a tremendous struggle. Ezekiel foresaw this, and hence in the thirty-eighth and the thirty-ninth chapters the conflict is portrayed by him by the gathering of the armies and their awful combat under Gog, king of the land of Magog, and Israel. Whether the former may regard some real earthly power, yet destined to fight the battles of the Lord to the overthrow of the whole system of the Man of Sin, we are not prepared either to affirm or deny—here, as elsewhere, Providence must be the interpreter of prophecy; but that ultimately Ezekiel makes reference to the struggle of sin and Satan against holiness and God, we cannot for a moment doubt. This issue is being carried out in the earth, on the part of God, by the true Israel, his Church, consisting of all believers of every denomination and in every land; and on the part of Satan, by the ungodly and rebellious throughout the world. No wonder that the prophet should describe the adherents of Gog by the names of many nations, for his power is great and his followers are numerous in all countries throughout the world; while the followers of the Lord constitute a "little flock," out of all kingdoms. Still, as in the case of the army of Gideon, they are the Lord's chosen few. And these different armies gather now—the wicked as ambitious, as rampant, as headstrong, and as fervent, in the fight of sin, as in former ages—nay, more so; and the holy and devoted to the Lord, alas! as apt to err as ever. But who can doubt the issue? Knowledge runs to and fro throughout the earth; nations are pre-

paring for an unparalleled change; the time hastens—Gog must be buried in Hammon-gog, and the feast of the beasts of the field, "eating the flesh of the mighty, and drinking the blood of princes," God's enemies, must take place. The smiling countenance of Jehovah must shine upon his restored and triumphing people, and, in the establishment of his universal kingdom, the song must be sung—"Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

And now our prophet describes the restoration and the victory. From the fortieth chapter to the close of his book, we have this description; and a most remarkable portion of Ezekiel's prophecies this is, though one which has occasioned much controversy and conjecture. On these it is no design of ours to enter. We say at once, that we believe his account of the restoration of the city and Temple is not to be taken literally, but figuratively. That it did not literally occur at the time of the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, all commentators are agreed; and if so, why the restoration of the Temple and full temple-service, when the gospel, whether by the personal or spiritual reign of Christ, is made to triumph? No more sacrifices can be required, for the perfect sacrifice needed to be but once offered; and assuredly, to go back to Jewish ceremonialism when the gospel has succeeded and saved man, would be to return to the beggarly elements during the season of the feast—a state of things utterly unsuited to the liberty, righteousness, and peace of the full gospel day. Our own idea is, that Ezekiel represents the glory and perfection of the triumph of the gospel by that which, to his heart, was the perfection of beauty both in religious worship and earthly well-being—a perfect city and a perfect temple. Indeed, the very fact of his exile had endeared both to his yearning, pious spirit; and in an outburst of the most remarkable architectural and ecclesiastical eloquence ever penned,

he presents to us his conception of the perfection of Messiah's reign. And truly, no imagery could be more suitable. The inhabitants of the whole world brought into citizenship under one government, swayed by the same laws, living under the same shelter, going out and in through the same gates, enjoying the instruction and refreshing of the same holy ordinances—one Temple for all, and that the Church of the living God, its blessings flowing forth, free to all, like living waters—all rejoicing in the same salvation, and giving utterance to their joy in the same song—till, looking as it were from other worlds to this, and seeing the nations now united in one happy, holy, harmonious, and God-honouring kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, the inhabitants of other worlds say of ours, "The name of that world now is, The Lord is there."

It is always with reluctance that we part from an interesting and agreeable companion, after having journeyed with him for a season. It is thus we feel in closing our account of the life and writings of Ezekiel. When we compare him with others of the prophets, we may not place him side by side with Isaiah, or in some respects esteem him equal to Jeremiah; still, there is a charm about his prophecies which, the more they are studied, the stronger becomes the spell. As we have proceeded, we have felt this to be the case. Now, for a season, it must be broken. Most earnestly do we recommend the predictions of Ezekiel to the careful perusal of our readers; and his character, piety, and devotedness, to their serious consideration. What industrious, faithful men these old prophets were! Their labours ran parallel with their lives: and such labours—lessons for all time, and studies for all eternity!

Where Ezekiel terminated his life and toil has been disputed. It has been affirmed that his body was deposited in the same cave with Shem. This has been questioned. Benjamin of Tudela says that "his tomb

is behind the synagogue, between the Euphrates and the Chebar, in a very fine vault built by Jehoiakim; that the Jews keep a lamp always burning there, and boast that they possess the prophet's work, written with his own hand, which they read every year on the great day of expiation." We are not indifferent to the close of the mortal life of the distinguished servants of the Lord. Of the meanest saint it may be said, "even their dust is dear to him." "The dust returns to the earth whence it came, but the spirit goes to God who gave it." Safe are the ashes of Ezekiel in the bosom of his mother earth; safe too is his spirit in the presence of his God. "They that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." And Ezekiel will return with him. The same Lord would we follow, the same Master serve, the same Messiah proclaim, and finally appear with him in glory. Reader, remember him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

DANIEL,

THE PROPHET OF THE COURT.

DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS IN EXILE.

THE biographies of the Bible are all life-pictures. They delineate what alone is worthy of being designated, *the life*—which is not simply what a man does, but what he is; not so much his personalities, as his principles. They exhibit the divinity which is in the man, moving him to what he accomplishes, and not what he accomplishes alone, as constituting his distinction. They leave the external man to be guessed at and imagined—giving us an account of his motives and master principles, that from these we may draw for ourselves a full-sized portrait. We really know very little from Scripture, in a majority of instances, what was the appearance of those whose histories are there recorded; but we are carefully informed of what they believed, and how they lived. The abiding part is that which concerned the inspired writers. They were the biographers of character. All externals are of little moment when compared with the internal and the spiritual. The body perishes, but the soul lives; the look of the man is soon lost to memory, but the good or evil which he does exists after him, fostering good or furthering evil in others. The soul is the measure of the man; his character is his monument. Thus the inspired penmen give us the true biography, by pointing out in every instance the sources of sin and the springs of sanctity, in all the lives which they have embalmed and memories which they have immortalized.

Among "the holy men of old who were inspired of God," Daniel stands pre-eminent. His character has generally been considered as faultless. Not that he was a sinless man, but that he was strikingly a sinner saved. By the grace of God he was what he was—a good man in an evil place, and a holy man in the midst of a wicked generation. Ezekiel and Daniel were for a time cotemporaries, though the former in his prophecies makes mention of Daniel, ranking him with Noah and Job. Some have supposed that this prophet was of the blood-royal of Judah. He was carried captive to Babylon, by order of Nebuchadnezzar, among the very earliest of the Jews who suffered exile. It had been intimated by Isaiah to Hezekiah, a hundred years before it actually occurred, that "his sons should be servants in the palace of the king of Babylon." In the lifetime of Jehoiakim, who proved himself a very unworthy descendant of good king Josiah, was this prophecy in part fulfilled. He was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and reinstated as his vassal on the throne; but with this command, given to Ashpenaz, the chief of the eunuchs—"Bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children (or young men) in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldees." Among those selected, in accordance with this injunction, were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Josephus states, that our prophet was of the family of Zedekiah; and we incline to the belief, from the language which we have quoted from the commencement of his inspired book, that he was of "the king's seed." Of this, however, we cannot speak with certainty; but we know that, as a pious, holy, devoted man, he was, what is far better, a son of God,

an heir of heaven, of the true royal seed, a king and priest unto God.

The age of Daniel, at the time of his arrival in Babylon, has been disputed. Some suppose that he was only twelve years of age, and others maintain that he was in his eighteenth year. Suffice it to say, that he was at that tender period of life, esteemed proper, in the East, to be placed under instruction for the king's presence and service. For this purpose he, and the three Hebrew youths already mentioned, were placed under the care of Ashpenaz. This training for attendance at court was an ancient oriental custom. Another practice, and one continued to this day in the service of the Sultan, was that of giving new names to those selected for this distinction. Hence Daniel was called "Belteshazzar, or him for whom Bel lays up secret treasures;" and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were respectively named Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Soon an opportunity occurred, at the court of Babylon, of testing the prudence and principles which were likely to govern the lives of these youthful Hebrew exiles. It was usual during the years of initiation which such young men underwent, for them to eat of the meat brought from the king's table, and to drink also of the royal wine, that they might appear ruddy and comely. But Daniel determined not to "defile" himself with any such luxurious food; and having found favour in the eyes of "the chief of the eunuchs," he appealed to him that he and his companions might be exempted from the compulsion of eating and drinking from the king's table, and be allowed to live upon "pulse and water." To this Ashpenaz objected, that it would be at the peril of his own life to grant this request, inasmuch as it was that they might appear healthy and cheerful that this food was given to them. Daniel entreats him to prove his proposition by a trial of ten days, and then to deal with them accordingly. He consents; and at the close

of the time their appearance was fully approved and their request allowed. For the possession of health, luxuries are not required; and that ought not to be esteemed beautiful which is not healthful. Many and most ruinous are our artificial wants, few and very simple the requirements of nature; and to be holy in our lives, we must be pure in our habits and simple in our tastes. The pious Daniel and his companions were servants of the holy Lord God.

During the seasons of their instruction, the Hebrew exiles were distinguished for the progress which they made. "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." They were not self-taught, but God-taught. A poor preceptor is the wicked nature of the best of men. To be the followers of the Lord, in any country, or rank, or age, there must be that enlightenment which the Lord alone can impart. This constitutes true piety; and these "four children," as their after lives fully attested, were converted by the power of the Spirit of God. But above them all stood Daniel—not only as a religious youth, but as a wise man—"an untier of knots," an unraveller of dreams. The years of their probation being ended, they were now called to stand before Nebuchadnezzar. In all things he found them peculiarly distinguished—"ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were within all the realm;" and Daniel wiser than all the others. They were now entering upon life. How important, that education be such as to fit for life's battle, whether it be in a cabin or in a court; and how obviously unprepared would these Hebrew youths have been for the struggle on which they were entering, had not "God given them knowledge!" Let the young remember, that however successful they may have been in obtaining other information, yet that they must remain really

uneducated to all eternity unless they attain to an acquaintance with the Lord; but having this, there is no sphere where they may not be useful, and no condition in which they may not be happy. Most amply is this attested in the history of Daniel, the prophet of the court.

Now, this finest of Old Testament characters commands our attention and commences his noble career. Decided in his attachment to all that was high-minded and holy, of a magnanimous disposition, possessing a strong and ardent soul, patriotic and princely, the life of Daniel presents a peerless narrative. What reverence for Jehovah he ever manifested; what communion with him he enjoyed! How truly he estimated all earthly greatness as nothing, when placed in comparison with the approbation and friendship of his Maker! And this, after all, is the secret of real greatness—it so completely subordinates created things to the Creator, sublunary things to the celestial, and things that are seen and temporal to those things which are not seen and eternal. We enter upon the study of the life, the character, the labours, and the predictions of this illustrious exile, conscious of our inability to do justice to the worth of so devoted a saint and so wise a prophet, but at the same time anxious to appreciate aright his pre-eminent piety, his invincible confidence, his fine intellect and far-stretching wisdom—feeling, that to commend his religion is to honour him who was its author, and to gain attention to his life and labours is to lead to the contemplation of one of the fullest, richest, and most impressive pages in the history of redeeming love, a gracious providence, and an everlasting kingdom.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM, AND DANIEL'S INTERPRETATION.

A glance at the objection which in some quarters has been entertained to the canonical character of the

Book of Daniel, may be necessary before entering upon an account of the first public service of the prophet, and which so much distinguished him at the court of Babylon. The objection is entirely a Jewish one. It has existed only since the coming of Christ, the time of which Daniel had so minutely foretold. This was enough of itself, to minds determined not to see in Jesus of Nazareth the true Messiah, to create a prejudice against the mission of the prophet. Hence the objection is first of all personal—the Jews alleging that Daniel's life was more that of a courtier than of a prophet. But this, with him, was not a matter of personal selection, but necessity; and even if it had not been so, the unbending principle and piety for which he was so remarkable even in a heathen court, become in the history of his life rather the occasion of praise than of blame. It is then asserted, that his prophecies consist entirely of dreams and visions. Yet it is not denied but this was one mode, and by no means an uncommon one, used by Jehovah in order to reveal his will to men. Hence Josephus, the most noted of all uninspired Jewish writers, and strongly opposed to Christ as the true Messiah, esteems Daniel one of the greatest of all the prophets, refers to him as having conversed familiarly with God, and as having not only had coming events made known to him, as the other prophets, but, beyond all the others, as having had also the exact time of their fulfillment revealed. Our Lord himself, in his ministry, acknowledged Daniel as a prophet, and on more than one occasion his predictions are referred to and received as inspired by the Apostle Paul. In fact, it is impossible, with a single eye and spiritually enlightened mind, to study his book without being convinced of its divine origin, and without feeling that nothing could have led the Jews to object to it but the clear, convincing, and blessed testimony which he bears to the time of Christ's appearing, the character

he should maintain, the work he should do, and the kingdom he should establish. With a happy conviction, therefore, that we are dealing with the approved truth of God, we proceed with our narration of the dealings of God with Daniel.

The kingdom of Babylon was now supreme in the world. Surrounding nations had been compelled to acknowledge its power and bear its yoke. Nebuchadnezzar was in the second year of his reign alone, having previously reigned for two years conjointly with his father. All was external peace. Pomp and parade daily met his eyes, and the incense of flattery his soul. Yet he was not at rest. In the night season "his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. He thought upon his bed, what should come hereafter." His own fate, the future of his vast empire, whether his family should be established or dethroned, whether his kingdom should continue or pass away, who should succeed him, and with what success—these matters, unseen, unknown, like dark clouds portending evil, hung around his spirit, filling it with trouble. Full of fearful forebodings about these things, he fell asleep—he slept to dream. A vision immediately connecting itself with these subjects occupied his soul and disturbed his repose. He awoke: the heaviness of his dream still rested upon his spirit, but the vision itself had passed from his memory. As in Egypt, in the time of Moses, magicians astrologers, and wise men, so esteemed, were kept in the court of Pharaoh, to advise with in difficulties—so also at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, in Babylon. In the morning the king sent for them, that his mind might be set at rest. They were ushered into his presence, large presents were promised to them should they accomplish his wish, and in the pride of their hearts they promised him all that he could possibly demand. Their self-complacency was short-lived. He required, on the pain of death, that they should inform

him both of his dream and its interpretation. Thus, in these early times, are we made acquainted with the tyranny of despotic sovereigns—a tyranny common to all despotisms, and plainly teaching how unreasonable it is to place in the irresponsible hands of any human being, power over the lives and destinies of others. With perfect frankness they aver, what they could not help declaring, that no man, unassisted by God, could do what the king required, and therefore that it was unjust to ask it. Their language is, "There is not a man upon earth that can show the king's matter; therefore, there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Ah, ye magicians and astrologers! where now your pretensions to your being inspired above all men by the gods—and where now your knowledge? When it served your purpose, you could claim it; now that it cannot avail, ye repudiate it. "For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain."

The true position of these four Hebrew youths in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, here appears. Some have supposed, because they were put under the chief of the eunuchs to be trained, that they therefore belonged to this class in the royal household. Not so, however; they were brought from Jerusalem to be placed among the Magi, who, in these Eastern courts, were selected from the illuminati of all the lands where they could be obtained. So now were they exposed to the same fate with the others of their order—all "the wise men of Babylon," those who had been consulted by the king and those who had not, being alike con-

demned. What was to be done? The decree of Nebuchadnezzar admitted of no delay. Arioch, the king's captain, and who had been commissioned to execute it, had already gone forth for its fulfillment.

To know how to speak or act with promptness, yet with prudence, is one of the most certain evidences of great ability. This faculty was remarkably displayed on this occasion by Daniel. Immediately he asks of Arioch, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" as if he had said—All have not been consulted; and therefore, why put all to death? The thing was reasonable, and at once commended itself to the judgment of Arioch. Daniel is informed of the particulars, and is permitted to enter into the king's presence. He asks of Nebuchadnezzar, what could scarcely be refused, that "he should give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation." His wish is granted. Immediately he proceeds to his companions Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, informing them of what had occurred, and entreating them to engage with him in prayer to their God for wisdom from above. Think of these exiles in prayer—a picture of piety in the bosom of idolatrous Babylon, on which heaven itself looked with complacency! Nor did they plead in vain. Their supplications were earnest and believing; and God, who never fails of his faithfulness to his people, heard their cry and answered their prayer. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven."

Away, thou heaven-instructed one—away to Arioch—away to the king! Let nothing selfish darken thy path. Show thy love, thy justice, thy large-heartedness: save the trembling astrologers from death—make known in Babylon the power, the wisdom, and the glory, of the God of Israel! Daniel hastens to the king's captain, saying, "Destroy not the wise men; bring me before the king, and I will show the king the

interpretation." Here mark the difference between the prophet of the Lord and the captain of Babylon. As if he had discovered Daniel, as one who could reveal to his sovereign the vision and set his soul at rest, so he arrogates to himself all the credit, and introduces him to Nebuchadnezzar, saying, "*I have found* a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation." And now one of the most remarkable interviews which ever occurred in a palace takes place in Babylon. On the one hand, there was the most illustrious sovereign of his age, Nebuchadnezzar, and on the other, a youthful Jewish exile; the one the possessor of a boundless empire, the other "a stranger in a strange land;" the one having power to decree life or death to multitudes at pleasure, the other under his decree to die, should he not succeed in what he had undertaken; the one a mighty monarch, yet miserable, the other a poor captive, but rich in faith, in the love of God, inspired by infinite wisdom, "a king and a priest unto God." What a contrast between them—an unhappy king, and a happy captive! Surely "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to Daniel, "Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." The king was now all attention; for this was the very subject of his anxious thoughts, waking and sleeping. Nor would the prophet take a single portion of the praise of the interpretation which he was about to offer of the king's vision to himself. He had informed him of the God of heaven, the God of Israel, as the discloser of secrets,

and he now adds, "As for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living." His humility, however, did not render him the less noble even in the eyes of an idolatrous monarch, but all the more remarkable and illustrious; for it is true both in a philosophical and religious sense, that "he who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The whole soul of Nebuchadnezzar now became absorbed. Daniel proceeded with his vision. He informs him that what he saw was "a great image," the head of which was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay, and its whole appearance bright and terrible. But this was not all he saw. He beheld also a stone, cut out "without hands," moving and growing till, coming in contact with this image, it smote it and brake it to pieces. And so shattered did it become, that all its parts were ground to dust, and were driven as chaff before the wind; whilst the stone itself continued to increase, and became a great mountain, filling the whole earth.

Such was Nebuchadnezzar's dream; the prophet adds to it the interpretation. The head of gold, he intimates, was the Babylonish empire, which was at that time the chief of the nations, and its king the most distinguished of sovereigns. But even that empire, before the kingdom of stone—the kingdom of durable, nay, deathless material—must be shivered to atoms. The breast and arms of silver indicated a kingdom which "should be inferior to that of Babylon." This, it is universally agreed, was the Medo-Persian empire, which rose upon the ruins of the Babylonian; which was inferior to the latter, because neither Cyrus nor any of his successors carried their conquests to the same extent—or worse than the latter, inasmuch as the Persian monarchs were some of the worst rulers who ever were possessed of empire. A distinction of some moment is here

offered by Josephus, to which we feel bound to allude. The two arms and the two shoulders of this part of the image, he remarks, are to be understood as indicating that division which took place in the Babylonish empire into that of the Medes and Persians, but which were afterwards united under Cyrus.

And now a third and vast kingdom is foretold. This is represented by "the belly and thighs of brass"—a kingdom of which it is predicated, that it should "bear rule over all the earth." This is the Macedonian empire. Alexander the Great subdued every part of the Medo-Persian power, and carried his conquests much further. And whilst it cannot literally be said that he conquered the whole world, nevertheless his possessions stretched far over Europe, Asia, and Africa; and from all parts of the earth ambassadors came to his court, paying homage to his authority, and submitting to his sway. This kingdom is well designated, a kingdom of brass; for the Greeks were celebrated for their brazen armour, insomuch that they were commonly called "the brazen-coated Greeks." "The two thighs of brass" are understood to refer to the two monarchies which arose out of the Macedonian empire—the one the kingdom of Assyria, under the sovereignty of the Seleucian kings, and the other that of Egypt, under the Ptolemys. For this must be observed, that these kingdoms especially, in connection with all Alexander's successors, had to do with the Jewish nation and Church.

And now Daniel informs Nebuchadnezzar of the establishment, character, rise and progress, of the then far distant Roman empire—described by "the legs of iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay." This empire was to be one of military might—"forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things." And looking back, as we can, upon the history of this as well as of the other kingdoms, we can see every part of the vision literally fulfilled, as the prophet foretold.

Over the kingdoms of the Seleucidæ and the Ptolemy, —in Gaul and Spain, throughout Asia and Africa, and as far as our own sea-girt island—"the legs of iron" victoriously marched, and subdued beneath the Roman sceptre the nations of the earth. Even Judah became a Roman province. Yet, vast as that empire was, it was not abiding. The feet of the image were not like the legs, all iron, but part iron and part clay—elements which would not intermingle and become hard and durable. Thus was the weakness of this kingdom typified. And just as the feet had ten toes, so subsequently was the gigantic empire of Rome divided into ten lesser kingdoms. So exact, in all respects, was this image as seen by Nebuchadnezzar, and described by Daniel; and so perfect is its interpretation, as given to us by the prophet and confirmed by history.

But the most important portion of the vision yet remains to be explained. Mark this stone cut out of the mountain without hands, breaking in pieces the image, and itself increasing and filling the whole earth. "Forasmuch," says Daniel, "as thou sawest this stone, the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Who can read these statements, in connection with the rise, the fall, and the faithful history of those empires to which we have referred, and which have all passed away, without perceiving that "this stone" is the kingdom of Christ—a kingdom hewn out of the hard quarry of sin-petrified humanity, not by human power but divine influence—a kingdom of redeemed ones—a spiritual and everlasting kingdom, which man could not create and which he cannot destroy? Ah,

this kingdom! Already, during its history, thrones and empires have risen and fallen, kings and conquerors have become celebrated and slept, nations have rushed to arms and swept as with a tornado of blood the surface of the earth, then gone to rest: yet this kingdom stands. Already, age after age, the poisoned arrows of ridicule and scorn have been shot at its subjects; the artillery of infidelity has attacked its strongholds; the sharp-shooters of wit and genius have sallied forth against its unwary hosts; every description of opposition has been leagued against its Lord and his anointed: still it stands, unshaken and uninjured, its subjects increasing in number, and its life and power hastening to share a part in the struggle of all lands, and to minister purity and peace to all peoples. Nor can it be stayed in its progress. Irreligion may array its opposition, infidelity may spread forth its snares, sophistry may entangle the votaries of sin—marching forward through them all, bursting every fetter, and surmounting every hollow and height, the armies of the Lord press on to victory; for this "stone cut out of the mountain without hands," this kingdom of everlasting truth and righteousness, must fill the whole earth. God speed its holy and sublime course; for he who has "on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords," is worthy to reign, and let him reign!

But in our attention to the vision, we must not forget its narrator and interpreter. Delighted with Daniel's remarkable display of wisdom, Nebuchadnezzar heaped favours upon him, even fell down before him, and, what was most pleasing, confessed that "of a truth, your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." Then, we are told, he made Daniel a great man, the chief of the governors over all the astrologers and wise men, and ruler of the province of Babylon. In the eyes

of the men of the world, he must now have been esteemed both fortunate and happy. But true religion is never placed in circumstances of so much trial, as when its possessor is elevated to a pinnacle of honour. Both the sun and the storm are far more likely to affect him who stands upon the summit of the mountain, than he who journeys in the vale beneath. And how shall Daniel stand the test of this sudden distinction? Happy circumstance! he had that within him which is life's best regulator and man's best friend—his best friend in every stage of life and every condition of society; the sanctifier of poverty, the safe counsellor of the wealthy, the bestower of true nobility, and the only guide to everlasting glory: he had true religion. Cultivating this possession, which Daniel did, there was little to fear concerning him. So, happily, the result showed. The very first thing the prophet asked of the king was, that he would appoint Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, instead of himself, rulers over the province of Babylon. This was done. A merciful arrangement: for in this district a vast number of the most important of the Jewish captives were located; and thus, by having those of their own nation set over them, their burdens would be lessened, their bondage become more bearable, and their condition partake more of the character of their own land. As for Daniel, "he sat in the gate of the king"—a phrase which appears to mean, either that he was the chief adviser of Nebuchadnezzar, or chamberlain of his household. His companions who united with him in prayer, were now joined with him in distinction. Piety and power are a happy combination in any state—power without piety is often a fearful scourge. Daniel, in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, now appeared "the prophet of the court."

THE THREE CHILDREN AND THE FIERY FURNACE.

The friendship of kings has long been proverbially fickle. The high position which they occupy, the power over their fellow men which they wield, the absence of equals from their presence and fellowship, and the adulation and flattery which they constantly receive, all are calculated to give predominance to the selfish over the benevolent instincts of human nature, and to render the possession of royalty a very unhealthy atmosphere for the pure growth either of friendship or religion. Not that there have not been kings who have risen above these unfavourable circumstances, and in the enjoyment of the loveliest revealings of humanity become firm friends and pious Christians; but they are noble exceptions, the memories of whose virtues have been embalmed in the affections of the people, and their names immortalized on the pages of history. Such was both the piety and affection of David and Jonathan; but even in the volume of Holy Scripture they stand pre-eminent and illustrious. Others might be mentioned from the records of our own and other nations; but still they are a select few. The great majority of those who have been born to sway the sceptre of empire, elated by power and distinction, have placed but little value on human life, have multiplied favourites, and have cared but little for the cultivation of the highest, most sacred, most abiding and elevating of human attachments.

This was strikingly illustrated in the life of Nebuchadnezzar. When Daniel had revealed to him his vision, he was prepared to do anything for him. Placed by him in the palace and near his person, he appears to have had power to obtain whatever he asked. Hence he had but to mention the appointment of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the office of governors of the province of Babylon, and his wish is at once complied

with. But a few years have now passed away—years in which the arms of Babylon were crowned with victory, and pride fills the heart of the king; the wisdom of the God of Daniel is forgotten, and Nebuchadnezzar seeks to deify himself.

It is painful to observe how the love of power grows in the wicked heart of man. Not satisfied with having his authority as a distinguished sovereign established over many nations, and his sway over his own empire acknowledged in a spirit of grateful loyalty, he dares to dictate to the consciences of his subjects, and commands that they all prostrate themselves before the idol which he chooses to set up. We have not the particulars, but we cannot doubt the fact, that Daniel remonstrated with the king of Babylon against such an impious undertaking. All however was in vain, although the prophet himself seems to have been excepted from the king's decree. Otherwise it appears to have been universal; and hence the trial of the piety of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, which Daniel has recorded in the third chapter of the book of his prophecies—than whom never were there three persons more worthy of governmental confidence or royal friendship.

The circumstances attendant upon this remarkable occurrence—in which the martyr-spirit was so magnanimously exhibited, and the power of God to save his servants, even amidst devouring flames, so happily displayed—are well worthy of the most careful consideration. Nebuchadnezzar had returned, after his wars with Judah and the neighbouring nations, loaded with spoils. For a time he satisfied himself with beautifying Babylon, with the construction of hanging gardens and the erection of magnificent temples. Among the latter, close to the royal palace, and at one end of the vast plain near to the city which received its name, Dura, from the circular enclosure which it

embosomed, was the temple of Belus. To the honour of this idol Nebuchadnezzar appears to have been especially devoted. In paying his homage to this false god, he determined to make a golden image out of the spoils he had seized in war, and to consecrate it in the plain of Dura, in the presence of the rulers and people, ordering that they should all prostrate themselves before it, on the pain of death for disobedience. He now devoted himself to the completion of this design. The image was made—in height "threescore cubits," or about ninety feet, and in breadth "six cubits," or about nine feet. It was erected in the plain, in the vicinity of Babylon, and in front of the temple of Belus. A proclamation was then issued, calling together "the princes, the governors and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." A decree followed this announcement, that "at what time they heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, they should fall down and worship the golden image; and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

It is worthy of remark, that in the neighbourhood of the remains of Babylon is still visible a vast enclosure, situated on the adjacent plain, and near to the principal mounds of the city, generally believed to be the sites of the palace and temple. This circle, as far as it can be traced, still shows that it was capacious enough to contain all the rulers and distinguished persons, as well as a countless concourse of the inhabitants of the province of Babylon.

The day is fixed, the announcements are made, the assembly is convened, the decree is registered. Just at this juncture some of the Chaldeans come before

the king, and, paying their homage to him, report that the three Hebrews whom he had set over the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—would not fall down and worship the image. Nebuchadnezzar burns with fury, and commands that they be immediately brought into his presence. Having inquired in reference to the rumours concerning them which had reached him, he reiterates his decree, and with strong emphasis repeats the punishment which would follow upon their continued disobedience. In language most respectful but decided, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answer him, announcing their determination not to fall into the sin of idolatry, but to serve the living and true God, leaving themselves in his hands with whom are the issues both of life and death. Exceedingly enraged that his sovereign mandate should be thus disregarded, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the fiery furnace should be heated seven times more than it was wont, and that "the mighty men of his army" should seize and bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and, with their clothes upon them, should cast them bound into the flames. They prepare to obey the king.

And now comes the trial. Exalted on his throne sits the victorious Nebuchadnezzar, surrounded by princes and nobles, by captive kings and victorious soldiers; and yet his power is withstood by three Jewish exiles. Can such opposition be permitted? Never is the strength of the strongest man demonstrated more completely to be weakness, than when it is raised in opposition even to the weakest child of God; and never does the sovereign power of man so soon become contemptible, as when it seeks to legislate for human conscience, or dictate in antagonism to the divine will. Religion is a matter solely between a man and his God, for which each must answer for himself, and in regard to which no man has a right to interfere to compel his fellow

man. Man may convince—he cannot compel. Opinion is not so to be formed; religion is not so to be learned. A superior authority may incarcerate the body, may bind it limb to limb, may buffet and torture, mutilate and murder it—throughout, the soul is free; and in its inmost recesses, beyond the reach of bayonet or sword, can "laugh at the drawn dagger and defy its point." Would that kings and governments had only learnt this lesson, as it was so early and so strikingly taught in the history of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Even now, would that it were properly understood and fully acted upon; the civil power confining itself to civil matters, and the religious convictions and opinions of men, when they do not lead to a course of action destructive either to morality or good government, being duly respected! Nebuchadnezzar had seen enough in the conduct of Daniel and of these very Hebrews, to convince him that the followers of the God of Israel were both obedient subjects and worthy citizens. Why should he ask them to obey him further? and, indeed, what he asks he was afterwards obliged to forego; but he must first be taught that there is One above all the elements, who can use them for his pleasure or bind their fury at his will.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are now taken to be cast into the fiery furnace, seven times heated; for the command of the king must be regarded: the heat of the furnace was at its highest pitch. The mighty men draw nigh with their victims. Every movement is hushed. The king's will is being obeyed, and the people are taught that his wrath is terrible. But his pride shall speedily be humbled, and his power be broken. Before the fury of the fire, the men that took the three Hebrew exiles to cast them in, were burnt to death. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego fell down into the furious flames, bound hand and foot. But, behold! the king rises from his throne; he shrinks back

with astonishment. All turn towards him—his eyes are rivetted upon the burning fiery furnace; he gazes with alarm into its midst. He addresses his counsellors, and asks, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered, True, O king! He answered and said, Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Yes; he was there—he who is ever with his people, who labour and suffer for him. "Men are immortal till their work is done." Even the seven times heated flame shall not destroy his servants, if it be for his glory that their lives should be spared. Struck both with remorse and wonder, in an instant Nebuchadnezzar draws near to the mouth of the furnace, and entreats that "the servants of the most high God come forth, and come hither." In a moment they do so; and in the presence of the whole assembly of princes, rulers, and people, they appear, "on whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them." They are exalted in Babylon.

What a change in the tide of opinion must now have come over this assembly! Daniel, with great skill, leaves us to imagine all the effects of this remarkable miracle, wrought before such a multitude, and in favour of those dissentients from the common consent of the assembled crowds, to the religious dictates of their sovereign. Even the king himself is affected and altered. We learn no more of the golden image, and the homage which it was to receive; but we hear immediately of Nebuchadnezzar publishing a decree in which he "blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and commanded that every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill: be-

cause there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." To exalt the name of Jehovah over all the idols that men worship, was, on the part of the king, but a proper expression of that conviction which this marvellous display of protecting power must have produced; but to run immediately into the opposite extreme, and to declare his determination to use his power to compel all others to think as he now thought, even of the God of Israel, was evidence equally conclusive that he had no right conception at all, either of true religion, or of his own duty as a sovereign in regard to it. Constrained respect, obtained by pains and penalties, the Lord will not accept as service. Had the king simply approved the fidelity to their divine Master of the three Hebrews, and recommended their God as the only living and true God, all would have been consistent and well. But he did more; and in exceeding this limit, and decreeing homage to Jehovah, he still showed that he was radically unchanged. We cannot, however, leave this remarkable incident, so strikingly and simply recorded by Daniel, without observing, that there may be circumstances in which opposition to the proclamations of kings may be real patriotism, and dissent from the religion of the state be true piety. In all such cases, much care and wisdom as to the motives, the principles, and the manner of acting, may be necessary. Still, if required, without hesitation they should be done. Let it be remembered, that on the part of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, it would have been disloyalty to God not to have rebelled against the decree of Nebuchadnezzar, and impiety before man not to have dissented from the common homage paid by princes and people to the image which the king of Babylon had set up, even although they had been called upon to suffer martyrdom.

Nothing has been more injurious to the kingdom of God, in all ages, than the subordination of spiritual re-

ligion to secular power and interest. There are certain unquestionable blessings which the possession of "pure and undefiled religion" cannot fail to confer both upon the government and people of the empire in which its principles are exercised and its duties discharged; and there are certain rights and privileges which every state must concede in order to the full and free enjoyment of religion. But the moment the spiritual overrides the secular power, the state becomes oppressed by ecclesiastical tyranny; and the instant the secular power interferes with the individual Christian or with Christian churches in the exercise of their privileges, Christianity suffers from intolerance. The true equilibrium between them is, when religion is left free to do its work in its own sphere, and the civil power in its sphere: then religion will further the ends of all good government, and the civil power will possess enlightened and sanctified subjects among whom to exercise the highest and noblest principles of its vocation. As it is, much of the time of senates, much of the wisdom and eloquence of statesmen, have been expended in endeavouring to settle disputes occasioned by the over-reaching grasp either of the secular or spiritual power. Much of the bitterness of parties is fomented and fed by clashing interests coming from the same source. Separate these, giving "a fair field and no favour" to religion, and liberty to governments to devote themselves entirely to their own affairs, and a new era will speedily dawn upon the nations. The prejudices of sect in the churches will give place to the provocations of love; the useful in religious creeds will establish the real; the lordly priest will discover his honour in his being the lowly minister; freedom of opinion will create a respect alone for fairness of opinion; piety will eschew pride, as it would poison; wisdom will appear what it really is, both good and great, because great in doing good; nobility will become another name for exalted virtue and practical

excellence; and governments will exist in their true character and in their proper place, as the executives of the public will for the protection of the lives, the liberties, and property of the whole people. Far, as yet, is the world from enjoying this blessed condition of things; still, the anticipation of its realization is no chimera, but a predicted certainty—having the gospel of Christ now working it out in the world, and the God of the gospel presiding over the sublime elements of its accomplishment.

THE FLOURISHING TREE BLIGHTED AND BROUGHT TO LIFE AGAIN.

Nineteen years have elapsed since the taking of Jerusalem and the completion of the captivity. Nebuchadnezzar was in the thirty-fifth year of his reign. He had returned to his capital flushed with victory, and full of the triumphs which he had achieved in his expedition against Egypt. He was now exalted to the highest pinnacle of empire, and was the greatest sovereign of his age. A full cup is in every grade of life difficult to carry erect; but requires especially a strong and steady hand when the bearer is exalted to a lofty eminence, and called to walk on a narrow summit. Few men can bear great prosperity without serious injury. Monarchs are but men. Again and again the king of Babylon had been shown that there is One who is "King of kings and Lord of lords"—one who has power over all nature and all nations—"by whom kings reign;" but he appears to have disregarded all instruction, and to have been carried away by pride into a sinful deification of himself: a fearful condition for a man to fall into, and one not likely to pass unpunished! Nor did it, in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, as the vision which was now revealed to him amply attests.

The king of Babylon was at ease in his palace.

Everything was flourishing throughout his far-spreading dominions. He was not only great, but elated by his greatness. He had retired to sleep, all the world adjudging him both illustrious and happy. But in his sleep he had a dream, and on his bed a vision, which filled him with terror and troubled him. The vision was that of a great tree growing in the midst of the earth: a strong tree, the height of which reached to heaven, and the branches of which stretched to the ends of the earth. The leaves of the tree were fair and its fruit plentiful, so that the beasts of the field took shelter under it, the fowls of the air dwelt in its branches, and all flesh were fed by its fruit. But this was only part of his dream. He beheld also, coming down from heaven, "a watcher, even an holy one," drawing near to this tree; and in an instant he heard him crying, with a loud voice, "Hew down this tree, cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from its branches; only leave its stump in the earth, bound about with iron and brass; and let it remain, wet with dew, with the cattle." Still the vision continues: but the figure becomes changed from a tree to a man, and, under the judgment of the watcher, his heart is changed from a man's to a beast's heart; and whilst he suffers thus, seven times or seasons are to pass over him. All this is confirmed "by the decree of the watchers, and by the word of the holy ones."

As in his former vision, so in this—Nebuchadnezzar, after he awoke, sent for the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, to interpret to him his dream. Unlike the former instance, however, when the vision of the king had departed from him, in this case he told to them both what he had seen and heard; "but they did not make known to him the interpretation thereof." At the last, Daniel was sent for; and when the matter was narrated to him, so struck with

amazement was he, that we are told, "for one hour he was astonied, and his thoughts troubled him." He then proceeded to lay the truth before Nebuchadnezzar, faithfully warning and entreating him to repent before the Lord, that the judgment which the vision recorded might be averted. Daniel's interpretation was, that the tree was the king himself, whose power had grown till it reached as it were to heaven, so completely was he elevated above every other earthly sovereign, and whose dominion had extended till it was felt and acknowledged to the farthest parts of the known world. "The watcher, even the holy one," is the Most High, the Angel of the Covenant, who carries out his purposes by his own holy instrumentalities, "making his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire"—who decrees the rise and fall alike of empires and kings on the earth—and who thus announced, by the hewing down of the tree, the downfall of Nebuchadnezzar by insanity, driving him from among men and making him to herd with the beasts of the field, to eat grass with the cattle, and like them to be wetted with the dew; all of which was to continue for seven years. But as the stump of the tree was still to remain in the earth, so he was not to die in this condition, but to be restored to his throne, though not long afterwards to flourish. The prophet, having thus announced to the king the interpretation of his vision, then solemnly adjures him to renounce his sins, to follow righteousness, to show mercy to the poor, and to seek the favour of the Almighty, that "his tranquillity might be lengthened." Alas! all was soon forgotten, and Nebuchadnezzar was more elated than ever.

Twelve months had now elapsed since the time of the vision and its interpretation. Nebuchadnezzar was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Turning his eyes over the city, and calling up before him its vast population and his own mighty power, he exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded, for the

house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?" The boast was a vain-glorious one; and scarcely had it escaped his lips, when a voice from heaven reached his ears, announcing that the time of the vision he had seen and of its fulfillment had arrived. In a moment it is done—the great monarch becomes as a senseless beast: he is driven from among men, he herds with the cattle, his hair becomes as eagles' feathers, and his nails as birds' claws. What a contrast, and what a judgment! What is majesty to Nebuchadnezzar now—what great Babylon to him who built it? For seven long years he continues in this fearfully degraded condition. At the end of this time he came to himself, looked up in humility to heaven, had his reason restored to him, and was enabled again to resume his sceptre and sit upon his throne. Indeed, so did the Lord influence the counsellors and inhabitants of the kingdom of Babylon, that they all sought unto the king as soon as he was recovered, and with great splendour did he again reign. But to the honour of Nebuchadnezzar let it be recorded, that all this he ascribed to the true God, the God of heaven and earth, giving the whole narrative contained in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, as an authorized proclamation of all that had occurred.

Soon after this the king died, and Belshazzar, his grandson, reigned in his stead. According to Berosus, as quoted by Josephus, he was "attacked by a disease, and died in the forty-third year of his reign." This disease must have been something remarkable, otherwise it would not have obtained such a prominent notice. What it was, conjectures there have been in abundance, but no certainty. Never, perhaps, in the world's history did any man experience greater vicissitudes than Nebuchadnezzar. Raised to the throne of one of the largest kingdoms of antiquity by a brilliant and successful career, he ascribed to himself what ought alone

to have been attributed to his God, and he suffered. Napoleon the First, of France, stands before us in history as having achieved still greater glory and distinction, and as having undergone, apart from the insanity of the king of Babylon, as remarkable a reversion of fortune. But the contrast between Nebuchadnezzar and Napoleon is greater than the similarity. Both became the monarchs of mighty empires—became renowned as successful soldiers, and beloved as illustrious sovereigns; but Napoleon fell to rise no more, whilst Nebuchadnezzar was led to look up to God, and was restored to his kingdom and honours. Napoleon died in exile, on a solitary rock in the midst of the ocean, having had years for reflection and consideration, but without confessing his selfishness or bewailing the effects of his ambition; Nebuchadnezzar owned his vainglory and guilt, was restored to his senses, and lived to acknowledge by public proclamation the glory, the goodness, and the presiding presence of Jehovah. How valuable such a confession; and how instructive the close of Nebuchadnezzar's life, in connection with such an authorized acknowledgment! Whatever is attempted apart from God, whether it be secular or spiritual in its nature, must in the best sense fail. Man is created for two worlds, that of the present and the future, and is connected with God in relation to both; so that it is at once his highest wisdom and safest policy to regard all he does in the light of eternity, and to undertake nothing apart from the recognized hand and supplicated guidance of Jehovah.

BELSHAZZAR'S IMPIOUS FEAST.

Belshazzar was the son of Evil-merodach, and was, as we have already intimated, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Evil-merodach reigned in Babylon during the seven years of his father's insanity, and for a short period

after his death. He is not understood to have acted a very prudent part during his viceroyalty; hence, on the restoration of his father he was imprisoned. In his confinement he contracted an intimate acquaintance with Jehoiakim, the king of Judah. When he came to the throne, he placed him above all the other kings who were captives at Babylon. Evil-merodach is supposed by some to have reigned only one year, and to have been immediately succeeded by Belshazzar. According to Josephus, he reigned two years, and was succeeded by Neriglissar, his sister's husband; then by Laborosoarchod, and lastly by Belshazzar. We incline rather to the belief, that Belshazzar was the immediate successor of his father, and that the others for a season disputed with him the right to the throne, but were speedily vanquished, and his authority acknowledged.

The reign of Belshazzar was one of destruction to his dynasty. He was an ill-fated king; an idolater, a blasphemer, and licentious. The lessons of history appear to have produced no impression upon his heart. What occurred to his grandfather, in forgetting the providence of Jehovah and attributing all his greatness and success to himself, spoke no words of warning and were esteemed no oracles of wisdom to instruct him. He lived to satisfy his lusts, and reigned to subordinate his subjects to his own pleasures. Nothing was too sacred for him to refrain from mocking, or too holy to be kept apart from his polluting touch. His history in holy scripture is a very short one, and is connected solely with his disgrace and overthrow. His reign altogether extended only over a period of four years—and throughout the whole we read not of one good or illustrious act which he accomplished. His name is associated alone with a fatal feast, with wives and concubines and wine—with the sacrilegious use of the holy vessels taken out of the temple of Jerusalem—and with a mysterious

declaration from God, in the midst of his folly, of the end of his dominion.

It was in the fourth year of his reign that Belshazzar made a great feast, calling together on the occasion a thousand of his lords. The palace of Babylon shone with all the brilliancy of oriental splendour on the occasion. Nothing that could dazzle the eye or excite the senses was wanting. Congregated around the festal board, were all the grandees of the empire—with the king, the princes, his wives, and his concubines. Loud was the sound of mirth and madness. Heated with wine, the king commanded that the gold and silver vessels which his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple of Jerusalem should be brought, and that out of them the king, his princes, his wives, and his concubines, should drink. Consecrated vessels! how often had they been borne by holy men in the drink-offering services of the Most High—and now to be desecrated by libidinous lips and polluted hands, in the night orgies of an idolatrous and impious king! They drink from them to the gods of gold, of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone, setting at naught the God of Israel. But stop! what means that bewildering stare of the all but maddened Belshazzar, freezing his folly on his lip, making his hair stand on end upon his head, and turning the loud laugh into expressive anxious silence? The eyes of the king are fixed upon the wall—he rises from his seat and looks. Every eye now follows those of the sovereign. All are alike alarmed. The sound of mirth is hushed—the vacant look of drunkenness gives place to one of unspeakable terror. See! on the wall the hand of an invisible being writes a few mysterious but mighty words. These were the words —"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." It was enough: folly and feasting are past—a breathless seriousness pervades the scene. "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the

joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

In these circumstances, at the loud and urgent command of the king, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, are brought into the banqueting hall. Pointing to the writing on the wall, Belshazzar announces that "whosoever should read the writing and show the interpretation thereof, should be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about his neck, and should be the third ruler in the kingdom." All "the wise men" were brought to make known the meaning of the writing, but all were unable to do it. Again the king was perplexed and troubled, and could not be pacified; and equally uneasy and astonished were his nobles.

But there was one in the palace whose ear was speedily alive to the sounds of the king's sorrow and dismay—it was a mother! In all haste she entered into her son's presence. She is introduced as the queen, but was really the queen-mother. She had not forgotten Daniel, however much her son had overlooked him. She intimates his excellencies, and narrates how he had been made master of the Magi by Nebuchadnezzar, and urges on the king her son immediately to send for him. Daniel is brought. With what calm dignity, we can imagine, must the prophet have entered into that strange scene; and with what holy disgust must he have looked around upon that royal and noble, but truly wretched throng! In a moment he is face to face with Belshazzar.

The king promises the same rewards to Daniel which he had done to "the wise men," to interpret the handwriting on the wall. The prophet instantly rejects his gifts, but offers to reveal the meaning of the writing. Not a moment does he tarry. In language emphatic as the language of approaching judgment, he informs Belshazzar of what Jehovah had done for Nebuchad-

nezzar—what power, and honour, and majesty, he had conferred upon him over many nations and people: he reminds him how, when his heart was lifted up and his heart hardened by pride, he was driven from his throne, deprived of his reason, and made to herd with the cattle—he recounts to him how this continued till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointed over it whomsoever he pleased; and then, turning to Belshazzar, he said, "Thou, his son, knowest all this, but hast not been humbled, but hast lifted up thyself against the God of heaven, using the vessels of his house in pollution, and praising idol gods who see not, hear not, know not; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified; therefore was this hand revealed before thee, and this writing recorded against thee."

Daniel proceeds to explain the mysterious oracle. All now listen to the man of God. This is the interpretation which he gave the king—"MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it; TEKEL, thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting; UPHARSIN, thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." Never on this earth was such a sermon preached to royal ears: never such a message announced in a royal banquet hall. Nor did the truth which the prophet taught tarry in its accomplishment. A few hours, and all was realized. Meantime, the king kept his word. Daniel is arrayed in purple, has a chain of gold placed around his neck, and proclamation is made constituting him the third ruler in the kingdom. What must have been Belshazzar's feelings as this solemn message was spoken to him—what those of his princes, his nobles, his wives, and his concubines—it is impossible either to conceive or describe. But the worst of all was to come. That very night the city was taken, the king was slain, and the kingdom divided. Cyrus, who had long laid siege to the city, had

been informed by two deserters how it might at once be entered. He was told to dry up the waters of the Euphrates, which ran beneath the mighty walls of the city, and thus obtain at once an unexpected as well as unprotected breach, through which he and his followers, without molestation, might enter, surprise, and take the citadel. This he did, and ceded Babylon to his uncle Darius, the Mede, whom he afterwards succeeded in his kingdom: who was also the uncle, by the mother's side, of Evil-merodach, and grand-uncle of Belshazzar.

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN.

Darius now reigns in Babylon. His first public act was to change the character of the government of the country. He set over the different provinces "an hundred and twenty princes, who should be governors of the whole kingdom." He then placed three presidents over these princes, who should superintend and direct them in the fulfillment of their duties, who should audit their accounts, and keep the king both from responsibility and injury. In the development of this scheme the prophet soon obtained a position of influence and distinction. He gained the confidence of the king, and was placed over the other presidents, "because an excellent spirit was in him." Nor was Darius satisfied with this, "but thought to set him over the whole realm."

It was scarcely to be expected that this pre-eminence to which Daniel had reached, would be viewed without envy or retained without opposition. Upright and holy as he was, his very integrity maddened the others against him, and led them to desire his overthrow. Both the presidents and the princes leagued together to find occasion to complain of him to the king. But their vigilance was vain—even jealousy could discover no fault in him, for he was a faithful man. They turn

from his state avocations to his religious life; for, say they, "we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Behold the issue, for it is a sublime one! Not a word, not an act, of the prophet's life, could they construe even into the appearance of evil; and yet, with so many combined against him, the espionage must have been complete. All he did, all he said, all he looked, was doubtless carefully watched. One thing alone gave the opportunity which his enemies desired of appearing before Darius against him; and who would have had it otherwise?—for that one thing was prayer: holy, devout, regular, heartfelt prayer. A believer without fellowship with God—a prophet without prayer? No; Daniel was a believer and a prophet, and "three times a day did he pray and give thanks."

A vast concourse had assembled at the palace. The presidents of the kingdom, the governors, the princes, the counsellors, and captains, having consulted together, had discovered, as they imagined, a scheme for Daniel's destruction. They determined to ask for a royal decree, unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, that whatever person in the realm should ask anything of either God or man for thirty days, save of Darius alone, should be cast into the den of lions. The request was flattering to the king as a recognition of his supremacy; and, not seeing its bearing upon the best subject of his empire, the consistent servant of the King of kings, he readily fell into the snare. To obtain this royal statute was the reason of the crowd of the nobility and rulers now entering the palace, to be ushered into the presence-chamber of majesty. They are speedily introduced into consultation with Darius. The immediate pretext which they put forward for this law is not stated; but most likely it was that of obtaining a full acknowledgment of the absolute authority of the

king. He instantly complies with their wish, and signs the decree. They leave the royal presence, and make known his sovereign mandate. Daniel hears of what had occurred, but regards it not, determined to obey God rather than man. In a spirit of boastful exultation these presidents and princes set themselves to find an occasion of complaint concerning his disobedience; nor were they long without the opportunity. But how often does it happen, that the wicked dig pits for the destruction of the pious into which at last they themselves fall!

Again the palace of Babylon is crowded by the same persons, seeking a second interview. It is granted. They inquire whether the king had not put his signature to the law which had been announced, that no man was to ask aught of either God or king, save of himself, for thirty days? He admitted that he had. They then accuse Daniel of having gone down to his house as usual—of having opened his windows towards Jerusalem, and of having prayed and made supplication three times a day to his God: thus regarding not the authority of the king, and setting at naught his decree. Immediately there flashed upon the mind of Darius light sufficient to show him into what a snare he had fallen: he was sore displeased with himself, and for hours, even to sunset, laboured to discover some mode by which he could rescue the prophet. His attempt was unsuccessful—he must leave it with Daniel's God. Again the presidents and princes urge upon Darius the law which he had made, and desire that it may be enforced. Daniel is seized and cast into the den of lions—a place of punishment which appears to have been specially kept for the speedy destruction of state offenders. In every age tyrants have had their lion's den of some sort or other, and the deeds of darkness which have been perpetrated in connection with them will hereafter prove a fearful revelation. Ancient Babylon with its den of

lions, and modern Babylon with its notorious Inquisition, are types of what tyrants require, whether secular or spiritual, in order to the fulfillment of their diabolical purposes in crushing the first risings of free thought, and of bringing into submission or quenching in the darkness of death the best, most manly, and noble, of the master-spirits of the world. Such has been the history of the life-struggle of men and nations desiring freedom in the past. But now a better era has dawned; the freedom of the press is at once the palladium of personal liberty, the medium of free inquiry, the irresistible concentration of public opinion against oppression and injury, the surest friend of just rulers and loyal subjects, and the most crushing ally which the necessities of the world have as yet enlisted against all hypocrisies, all tyrannies, every order and description of ungodliness and injustice.

And now Daniel is shut up in the den of lions. Darius expresses to the prophet his feeling regarding this fearful wrong. "Thy God, whom thou servest continually," he says, "he will deliver thee." This, however, was rather intimating the hope than predicting the fact. A stone is placed over the mouth of the den, that Daniel may not escape. The seal of the king is placed upon the stone, so that no one may remove it contrary to royal order. Here the prophet continues during the whole night. What society for a saint—hungry, roaring, blood-thirsty lions; what company for him who had spent his life in a palace, who had been so honoured, and now was cast out to perish! Yet not left, for God was with him; he was his friend—and such a friend! He who stayed the consuming power of the flames, so that they did not singe the hair of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, could also shut the mouths of the lions, curb their fury, tame their rage, and make them, instead of injuring the prophet, to crouch at his feet. Even so did he keep his servant

from harm; so that never, perhaps, in the whole history of his eventful life, did he spend so happy a night—God so manifestly with him, protecting him, and showing that his piety was well-pleasing to him. Meanwhile Darius spends the night in fasting, the ordinary music which cheered the palace being forbidden, rest having departed from him, and anxiety for Daniel, whom he loved and honoured, absorbing his whole soul. We cannot but esteem this monarch, in the light in which this narrative places him before us; he was rather to be pitied than blamed. What a night this must have been for him! What self-condemnation, what sorrow, what disgust connected with the character of those with whom he was encircled, must have haunted and harassed his existence throughout its sleepless hours, tearing and rending his soul with the grim spectres of remorse and shame—making his tapestried apartment a chamber of direst pain and densest darkness, a lion's den indeed; whilst that where Daniel was spending his night with his God, in the company of angels, was illumined with a celestial radiance and furnished with divine felicity!

The morning dawns. With breathless speed the king hastens to the lion's den, to ascertain the fate of the prophet. With intense affection and concern he cries, "Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" At once the prophet replies, "O king, live for ever! My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den. So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." Not a word of reproach escaped Daniel's

lips in regard to his enemies; he leaves them with his God. Well did he know that sin brings its own punishment, and that they must reap its bitter fruit. Nor were they long in doing so. The same hour in which the prophet was released, Darius commanded that the princes who had accused him should be seized, and with their wives and children be cast into the lions' den. He was obeyed; and before they reached the bottom, they were destroyed by the wild beasts. An awful warning this to all who would persecute the servants of the Most High; and strikingly illustrates the certainty of the retributive justice of Him "who visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children."

Nowhere are we more forcibly taught, than in this narrative, how God is the protector of the innocent and the punisher of the guilty. Its salutary lesson ought never to be absent from the memory of the pious, it is so encouraging to virtue and destructive of vice; so animating in the way of right-doing, and so subversive of all that is evil. Steadily Daniel held on his heavenly course, confiding in Him who alone could sustain and protect him. This is true piety—this is saving faith. As for Darius, he made proclamation throughout his dominions "that men should fear the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, whose kingdom abideth for ever, who worketh signs and wonders, who is the Deliverer and Saviour."

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE FOUR KINGDOMS.

In our narrative of the life and doings of Daniel, we have followed the order adopted in the Scriptures. In accordance with the same arrangement, we must now return to the era of Belshazzar's sovereignty. Hitherto we have had to describe facts which have been immediately connected with the personal history of

Daniel and his companions; now we enter upon visions which relate to vast spiritual and political revolutions. Belshazzar was in the first year of his reign. It was night, and the prophet was asleep upon his bed. In this condition the Lord favoured him with a remarkable vision. Indeed, in this form he appears especially to have instructed him. To this revelation of coming events, of the most momentous character, our attention must now be directed. From henceforth Daniel appears before us as a prophet.

He was gazing upon the far-spreading sea. All over it was waveless and calm; when, suddenly, the winds blew from the four quarters of the heavens, and strove together upon the water, when "four great beasts" came forth from the troubled waves and appeared to the prophet—their appearance diverse one from another, yet all so distinct that Daniel had no difficulty in describing them. The *first* which he saw was like a lion, having eagle's wings; but as he looked upon it he saw its wings plucked, its body raised above the earth, the heart of a man given to it, and made to stand upon its feet as a man. The *second* was like a bear, raising itself up on one side, having three ribs in its mouth, between its teeth; and the ribs as if they said to it, "Arise, devour much flesh." The *third* was like a leopard, which had four wings as a fowl; and it had four heads, and dominion was given unto it. And the *fourth* was as a wild beast, but unlike all other beasts, having great iron teeth, and being dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly—so that it brake in pieces and devoured the other beasts, trampling them under its feet; and on its head it had ten horns. And as the prophet considered its horns, behold, another small horn arose, plucking up by the roots three of the other horns; and this small horn was full of eyes, like the eyes of a man, and "a mouth speaking great things."

Such were the four beasts as they were seen by

Daniel; but the vision, as it was given to him, did not end with them. He looked till he witnessed thrones cast down, and the King of kings, "the Ancient of Days," appear. And truly his appearance was awful, yet glorious. His garment was as the bright light, glistening on the newly fallen snow; his hair was white as the pure wool; the throne on which he sat shone as a flame of fire, and the wheels of the throne were red like the burning furnace. Before him flowed a fiery stream, ten thousand times ten thousand ministered before him, the judgment was set, and the books were opened. In this solemn season, the beast which had trampled upon all the others was slain and cast into the fire; the dominion of the others was swept away, and their lives prolonged only for a little time. Now the Son of Man appears, and comes before "the Ancient of Days;" and to him was given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom over all nations and people—a dominion which is to be everlasting, and a kingdom which is to abide forever. And as this transcendent panorama passed before the astonished spirit of the prophet, he was grieved in soul and sought to understand it. In his dream, he saw one standing and looking upon the scene. He goes up to him, and entreats him to show him its meaning. All such supplications are heard and answered. God never sends his word without being willing to afford an interpreter of it, to the anxious inquirer. We have but to ask, and we shall have the explanation. Providence is he who always stands by to unfold the meaning of prophecy. But concerning saving truth, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." So Daniel received and has recorded the import of this vision.

The sea which the prophet saw rocked by the four winds of heaven, is the symbol of the earth in regard to the political aspect of the nations, to the rise and fall of

kings and empires, and to these events as being as much under the control and direction of Jehovah, as are the winds and the waves, however great their fluctuations. The four beasts were emblematical of four kingdoms, which were to arise and influence the world's destinies, and each of which was to possess the characteristic qualities for which each beast is noted. These kingdoms are represented to Daniel by wild beasts, and not, as to Nebuchadnezzar, by an image: because, as has been observed, the mind of Nebuchadnezzar was wholly taken up with the admiration of worldly pomp and splendour, whereas the mind of the prophet rejoiced supremely in heavenly and spiritual things; and as those kingdoms were neither to regard the liberties of man nor the service of the one living and true God in the world, so under the emblem of fierce and wild beasts were they foreshadowed as the great supporters of idolatry and tyranny.

The first beast, described as a lion having eagle's wings, is the type of the great Babylonian empire, which, by the conjoined figure of the king of beasts and the king of birds, is represented as the first and noblest kingdom. The eagle's wings denote celerity and strength; and the lion's body, ferocity and destructive power; both together sufficiently showing the rapidity with which the Babylonish armies carried forward their conquests, and the spirit in which their victories were obtained, achieving for their country both dominion and splendour. But the prophet witnesses "the wings," as Grotius explains it, by which the lion is lifted up from the earth, "plucked." And, indeed, when the vision was revealed, this was beginning to be accomplished; for during the whole of the reign of Belshazzar, the Medes and Persians were encroaching upon it, and, as we have seen, his sovereignty ended with the submission of Babylon. Meanwhile, the lion was to receive "a man's heart, and stand upon its feet

as a man:" which some commentators explain as referring to Nebuchadnezzar's being driven to herd with the cattle, but afterwards coming to himself, acknowledging the hand of the Lord; and reigning as subject to him; but which we rather incline to consider, with Bishop Newton, as intimating the change which came over the people of Babylon, who, when their empire was subverted, became more humane and humble; and they who had previously vaunted as if they had been immortal, now felt themselves to be but men.

The second kingdom, represented by "another beast, like to a bear," one of the most voracious of animals, denotes that of the Medes and Persians, than which never was empire more greedy of blood-shedding. "A bear," says Aristotle, "is an all-devouring creature;" and so Grotius remarks, the Medo-Persians were great robbers and spoilers, even as the prophet Jeremiah predicted concerning them: Jer. li. 48, 56. Many particulars have been enumerated by the learned Bochart, and others since his time, in order to show how truly this kingdom deserved to be represented by this wild beast; but all of them tend to illustrate the same point—namely, that its whole history is one of cruelty and rapine. This bear "raised up itself on one side," expressive of the subjection of the Persians to the Medes, at the time of the conquest of Babylon, and afterwards of the Medes as being superior to the Persians; one party always seeking supremacy over the other. It had "three ribs in the mouth of it, between the teeth of it;" generally considered as descriptive of the kingdoms of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt, which were conquered by it, but were not properly parts of the empire. They were ribs, as their addition much strengthened the Medo-Persian rule; and they were ribs "between the teeth of the bear," as under its iron sway they were grievously ground down and oppressed: while the cry, "Arise, devour much flesh," is the true interpretation

of the genius of the Medo-Persian empire. Isaiah, describing it, says, "their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces, and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb." Accordingly, history has narrated that its kings placed no value upon human life, but in fact delighted in torturing and destroying it. Cambyses, Ochus, and others, were more like bears than men. Ammianus Marcellinus describes them as "proud, cruel, exercising the power of life and death over slaves and obscure plebeians. They pull off the skins from men alive, by pieces or altogether; and they have abominable laws, by which for one man's offence all the neighbourhood is destroyed." So also Calmet informs us that "the Persians have exercised the most severe and cruel dominion that we know of. The punishments used amongst them beget horror in those who read them."

The third kingdom, foreshadowed by our prophet by "another beast, like a leopard, having on its back four wings of a fowl; having four heads, and having dominion given to it," is the kingdom of Macedon or the Grecian empire, which under Alexander the Great subdued the Persians, and followed them in influence and power. Fitly is this kingdom typified by a leopard. The prophet Habakkuk, in speaking of the armies of Israel, remarks that "their horses are swifter than the leopards." How descriptive therefore, the leopard, of the amazing rapidity with which Alexander carried forward his conquests—as Jerome has remarked, "from Illyricum and the Adriatic Sea to the Indian Ocean and the river Ganges; not so much fighting as conquering, in twelve years subjugating part of Europe and all Asia to himself." For the same reason, and yet more emphatically to express it, this wild beast has "four wings." The lion of the Babylonian empire had only two; the leopard of the Macedonian kingdom has four. The leopard, as a spotted animal, typifies either the diversi-

ties in Alexander's character, sometimes merciful and sometimes cruel, sometimes temperate and sometimes drunken, sometimes abstemious and sometimes incontinent, or, what is more probable, the numerous nations, in different climes, of different colours, and with different customs, over which Alexander reigned. The leopard still farther, as Bochart remarks, as an animal of small stature, but of great courage, so as not to be afraid to engage with the lion or any of the largest beasts, represented Alexander, a king over a small kingdom, himself a man of small stature—his army, too, by no means numerous; yet daring to attack Darius at a time when his kingdom extended from the Ægean Sea to the Indies; when his army numbered six hundred thousand, and that of Alexander only thirty thousand men. But "dominion," says Daniel, "was given unto it;" showing that it was not the celerity of Alexander alone, nor his military skill, nor his brave soldiers, but the overruling providence of God, which afforded him dominion; "for the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," but "the Lord putteth down one and setteth up another." And to complete this figurative history of the Macedonian empire, the leopard had four heads, denoting the four kingdoms into which it was divided after the death of its founder, and over which his four most distinguished captains held rule—namely, Cassander over Macedon and Greece, Lysimachus over Thrace and Bithynia, Ptolemy over Egypt, and Seleucus over Syria.

The fourth kingdom was prefigured by a beast, the appearance of which was such that Daniel could not name it. Most commentators are agreed in considering it to refer to the great Roman empire. It is described as "dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly." The prophet was most anxious to ascertain from the angel to what it applied. Immediately he is informed—to the fourth kingdom which should arise,

which should be diverse from all the preceding, which should devour the whole earth, tread it down, and break it in pieces. It is strange that there ever should have been any diversity of opinion as to what kingdom this pointed. No other but the Roman empire has possessed the characteristics which are here so clearly typified. Both the kingdoms of the Seleucidæ in Syria, and of the Lagidæ or Ptolemys in Egypt, in extent, strength, and conquest, cannot for a moment be considered as meant, inasmuch as both of them were much less formidable than either of the kingdoms which preceded them; whilst in all respects the Roman empire realizes the description. Daniel, indeed, has not informed us as to the shape of the beast which represented the fourth kingdom; but the apostle John, in the Apocalypse, has supplied the deficiency. It had, he says, "the body of the leopard, the feet of the bear, and the mouth of the lion;" or, the rapidity of conquest which distinguished the progress of the Macedonian kingdom, the tyranny or bearish sway which characterized the Medo-Persian, and the lion-like inhumanity of the Babylonian. Its being "dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly," is observable from the fact that "one hundred and fifty years before the Christian era the Romans had reduced the kingdoms of Macedonia, Pergamus, Syria, and Egypt; they were masters of Europe, of a great part of Asia and Africa, and all Asia Minor; their authority was acknowledged from the Ultima Thule of the Northern Ocean to the gorgeous plains of Syria and the fertile oases of Egypt; and this stupendous empire became almost what the Roman writers delighted to consider it—the empire of the world." And no government was ever more distinguished for its iron despotism—even as this beast had iron teeth.

But it had also "ten horns." In the language of prophecy, "horns" typify powers or kingdoms. "Thy

horn," says David, "shall be exalted like the horn of an unicorn"—that is, thy power or kingdom shall be exalted. That empire, therefore, which is here prefigured, may be discovered by its being subdivided, after reaching the climax of its strength and glory, into ten kingdoms, corresponding with the ten horns. Now of no other but of the Roman empire can this be affirmed. This same fact was previously represented by the ten toes of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar, as well as its tyranny and destructibility by the iron and the clay. These kingdoms have been variously enumerated; but, in the main, commentators are agreed concerning them. They are the following:—1. The Huns, in Hungary; 2. The Ostro-Goths, in Mæsia-Italy; 3. The Visigoths, in Pannonia; 4. The Franks, in Gaul; 5. The Vandals, in Africa; 6. The Suevi, in Spain; 7. The Burgundians, in Burgundy; 8. The Heruli, in Italy; 9. The Saxons, in Britain; 10. The Longobards, in Lombardy. Moreover, in the midst of the ten horns another "little horn" was to spring up, full of eyes, having a mouth speaking great things, and plucking up by the roots three of the first horns. Of course this power also must be sought for in the Roman empire, or among the ten horns. By some it has been supposed to refer to the Western Roman Emperor, but is now commonly applied to the Bishop or Pope of Rome. And nothing could possibly be more descriptive of the true character of the popedom. Up to the period when the Bishop of Rome assumed temporal authority, the office was respectable, and the persons who filled it were revered. From the time when it became a "horn," a temporal power, it became an empire of spiritual tyranny and personal aggrandisement. In worldly wisdom it has been unequalled—"a horn full of eyes;" in vaunting titles, blasphemous arrogance, and preposterous assumptions, it has never had its parallel upon earth—"a horn with a mouth speaking very great things." "His look was

more stout than his fellows;" and never has sovereign, so much as the Pope, possessed himself more fully of power over crowned and mitred heads, requiring all authorities to bend at his foot and pay him homage. "And he shall speak great words against the Most High," or, as if he were the Most High, God's vicegerent upon earth—disregarding all laws, divine and human; "wearing out the saints of the Most High," by persecution, inquisition, and massacre; "changing times and laws" by appointing fasts and feasts, by canonizing saints, and by granting indulgences. In short, this account given by our prophet is but an antedated history of popery, at once the most true, concise, and complete. While the three other horns, plucked up by this little horn, we believe are, the three kingdoms of the Greeks, the Lombards, and the Franks, or the exarchate of Ravenna, Lombardy, and Italy, which were early subordinated to the temporal power of the Popes—"that they should hold them in their own right, principality, and dominion." How full the account of this fourth empire, its divisions—and that dreadful power, rising among the ten kingdoms, reigning still, and predicted to continue till the accomplishment of the "time, and times, and the dividing of time!" Yet, blessed be God, it must come to an end.

The last kingdom seen by Daniel in this amazing vision is that which is to remain. He beheld, drawing near to the Ancient of Days, one like the Son of Man, who came in the clouds of heaven, and supreme authority was ceded to him. Who this Son of Man is, Jesus has himself informed us. "Hereafter," says he, speaking of himself, "shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away,

and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Accordingly, the angel said of Jesus before he was born, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." How refreshing it must have been to the prophet, after what he had witnessed—the wrong and the wretchedness of coming empires—to perceive beyond all, and more lasting than all, a kingdom arising over which the Son of Man was to reign—preceding kings being more like sons of demons: in whose empire humanity was to be exercised and elevated, holiness to be cultivated, liberty to be enjoyed, God to be glorified, and happiness to be universally possessed! Here in the vision the spirit of the holy Daniel must have felt at home. All previously was darkness, cruelty, and crime; all now was light, the light of truth, the life of God, and the joy of heaven. And though as yet this kingdom is not universal, still it exists and extends, and this prophecy hastens to be accomplished. Blessed world, when the sceptre of the Son of Man shall be swayed over all nations! O to share a part in the furtherance of this kingdom, and in the fulfillment of this prophecy!

DANIEL'S REMAINING VISIONS.

By a diversity of illustrations, and during the reign of different kings, the same great historical verities already revealed to the prophet are now more minutely described. In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, while Daniel was at his palace of Shushan, in the province of Elam, there was given to him the vision of the ram and the he-goat. The former of these represents the Medo-Persian empire, the latter the Macedonian. The Babylonian empire was now omitted, because it was on the eve of passing away; and, as we have seen, in the fourth year of the sovereignty of Belshazzar, actually fell into the hands of the Medo-Persians. The

ram with two horns is remarkably appropriate as an emblem of this latter empire, inasmuch as it was customary for the Persian monarchs to wear, instead of a diadem, a ram's head with horns and adorned with precious stones; and even to this day travellers inform us, the ram's head is seen on the pillars of Persepolis, the supposed Pasargata where Cyrus was buried. The prophet sees the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, no beast being able to stand before his power. This account is somewhat more particular, but equally true of the Medo-Persian conquests, than that given in the former vision of the bear with three ribs in his mouth: for towards the west they extended to the Ægean Sea and the boundaries of Asia; towards the north, over the Armenians, Cappadocians, and other nations; and towards the south, over Egypt. Under Darius they conquered a great part of India. Truly may it be added, the ram "did according to his will, and became great," for none of the neighbouring kingdoms could withstand Persia. And even after the time of Cyrus, seven provinces more than he possessed were appended to the empire, till it stretched "from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and twenty-seven provinces."

Now Daniel witnesses the approach of the he-goat from the west to fight against the ram and to overcome him. This symbol, too, of the Macedonian or Grecian empire, is most appropriate. This goat had one great horn between his eyes. This is generally admitted to describe Alexander the Great. The Mohammedans of the East to this day speak of this conqueror as "the horned;" and his people were so represented, because they had built a city which they called Ægeae, or the goat's town, from which they were called Ægedae, or the goat's people, a goat being their ensign. This goat came from the west, or Europe, as lying west of Asia: he came "on the face of the whole earth," or carrying

everything before him; "he touched not the ground"—so rapid, as we have seen, were his conquests; he came to the ram, "standing before the river, and ran into him in the fury of his power;" and the first engagement of Alexander in which he overthrew the Persians was at the river Granicus in Phrygia. From this time the kingdom of Macedon became great, to the time of Alexander's death. That occurred "when he was strong," even in the flower of his manhood, at Babylon. This was the breaking of "the great horn." Then "four notable horns" came up in its place. These, as we have already shown, were the four most distinguished generals of Alexander's army, who, after his own sons Alexander, Ægus, and Hercules were put to death, reigned over Greece, Thrace and Bithynia, Egypt, and Syria. But now there came out of these "a little horn," which waxed exceeding great—in fact, greater than all that preceded it. There have been two opinions maintained concerning "this little horn"—the one, that it prefigured Antiochus Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus the Great; and the other, the Roman power. We cannot agree to the former interpretation, because the kingdom of Antiochus was rather the continuation of one of the four kingdoms than the rise of a new empire; and we adopt the latter, because the Roman is the empire which immediately succeeded these. The king of this empire is to be one of fierce countenance, according to this vision; and in this respect the warlike character of the Roman people fully agrees. He is to arise "at a time when the transgressors are come to the full;" and in Judea, when the Roman power prevailed, even the office of the high priest had become a marketable commodity. He was to "stand up against the Prince of princes;" and we know that a ruler of the Roman empire gave up Messiah to be cut off, and its emperors withstood Christianity for centuries. So also "the daily sacrifice was taken away by them and its place cast

down," when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Indeed, in every view we agree with those who look upon the little horn which is predicted to become so great a power, as referring to the small beginnings of the Roman empire, which afterwards waxed so mighty. The contemplation of this vision appears for a time deeply to have affected the prophet, but afterwards he arose and "did the king's business."

We now come to a very momentous epoch in Daniel's life. In the first year of the reign of Darius, the prophet occupied himself in a careful study of the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning the period of the close of the captivity. He discovers that the time drew nigh. It would appear to have been near the sixty-eighth year of their sufferings in Babylon. Daniel therefore betakes himself to prayer; and in one of the most penitential, self-humbling, and sin-confessing prayers ever presented, and which we have recorded by him in the ninth chapter of the book of his predictions, he supplicates Jehovah for favour to his ancient people, to Jerusalem, and to the land of Judea. His prayer is heard, the angel Gabriel is sent to him, and the time of the deliverance of Israel is revealed; but understanding is given to him to apprehend and announce events far more important than any of mere temporal concern. Jerusalem is to be restored and the Temple rebuilt, and that even in troublous times; but Messiah, the Prince, is also to come, "to finish transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness." The time when this is to take place—when Christ is to be cut off, though not for himself—is to be "seventy weeks," or "four hundred and ninety years;" each day representing a year. The commencement of this period is fixed to the time when the order was issued for rebuilding the Temple, in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes. "Seven weeks," or forty-nine years, was the

Temple in building; sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years, and Messiah appeared and was publicly acknowledged, during the ministry of John the Baptist; and one prophetic week, or seven years more, brings us to the time of our Saviour's passion, or the thirty-third year of his life; in all, according to the prophecy, four hundred and ninety years. Then is shown to the prophet the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the subversion of the Jewish polity, and the second coming of Christ.

In the last three chapters, in the book which bears his name, Daniel has recorded his concluding vision. It was revealed in the third year of the reign of Cyrus. It was given to him after he had been "mourning three full weeks." This he had done, not indeed from any previous intimation or expectation of a vision, but because of the obstructions which had taken place in the building of the Temple. He was by the banks of the great river Hiddekel, when in a moment one in a human form appeared to him. He was clothed in linen, girt about the paps with a golden girdle; his body was as the beryl, his countenance as lightning, his eyes as lamps of fire, his arms and feet as burnished brass, and his voice as the voice of a great multitude. This was he who came to speak comfortable words to the prophet, and to make known to him what was yet to happen. And who can read the description here given by Daniel of this wonderful personage, without concluding that he is the same who, so many years afterwards, appeared to the apostle John in Patmos? He discovers to him the events to occur in Persia after the death of Cyrus; the succession of Xerxes, and his successful expedition into Greece; the arrival of Alexander the Great; the overthrow of the Persian empire; the Greek dominion; the continued wars between Syria and Egypt; the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes; the destruction of this prince; and the victory and hap-

piness of the people of God. The prediction, indeed, concerning the kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, from the death of Alexander to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, is so circumstantial and particular, that it is more like a history than a prophecy. Equally remarkable are his accounts at this time of events extending through all ages, to the period of the resurrection and the consummation of all things. He announces the rise and progress of Christ's kingdom; the rise and fall of antichrist, "the time of the end;" the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, the beginning of the millennium; the desolation with which it should be preceded, and the glory which should follow; the value of being truly wise and truly useful, for the former shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever. When, however, the fulness of this glorious day to the Church is to arrive, Daniel leaves in uncertainty; for, anxious as he himself was to understand what was meant by "a time, times, and an half," all the reply which he had from him who was clothed with linen was, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

Only one more event remains to be particularized, in connection with the life and labours of this prophet. We have seen that, at the death of Darius, the throne of Persia was filled by Cyrus. When he first took Babylon he formed a very high opinion of Daniel; this was increased after his return from his Syrian expedition. We may easily imagine that the prophet would turn his influence to the best account with the king, in seeking the restoration of the Jews. Josephus mentions that Cyrus was shown the prophecies of Isaiah, both concerning himself as the deliverer of this people, mentioned by name one hundred and forty years before he was born, and as becoming a great king over many nations and the restorer of the Temple of the Lord, causing it to be rebuilt, as well as Jerusalem to be

reoccupied. Daniel was very likely to have placed these predictions before the king. He had constant access to him; and in the decree of Cyrus for the return of the Jews and the re-erection of their city, these prophecies are referred to, showing that he was acquainted with them. So our prophet lived to see the close of the seventy years' captivity; but he never himself returned from exile. When the Samaritans, in the third year of the reign of Cyrus, obstructed the rebuilding of the Temple, which much afflicted Daniel, he appears to have been in his ninety-first year, having been led into captivity when he was eighteen, and continued in it for seventy-three years. Very soon afterwards he died: where, and at what precise time, is unknown. He is believed to have remained at Babylon, in order, with his influence at court and with the king, the better to serve his country and the interests of the Jewish people. His tomb has been shown for ages, in Persia, near the ruins of Shushan, and the tradition is common that he died there. Josephus says that he built for himself a noble residence at Shushan, and that in it the Persian and Parthian kings were afterwards interred. This is not at all unlikely, and hence his own account of his being "in the palace at Shushan, in the province of Elam."

Of all the prophets of the Lord, none is more remarkable than Daniel. The circumstances both of temptation and difficulty in which from his earliest days he was placed, and the manly, prudent, holy character which throughout his life he sustained, have raised for him a monument and accorded to him a name which is by none surpassed and by few equalled, even among the noble army of the saints and heroes of Scripture. Not once do we find the prophet faltering in the path of virtue, or failing in the service of God. Neither afraid of a phalanx of inimical princes or a den of lions, he prays to the Lord despite the decree of the king. From his youth he had a remarkable apprehension of the

things of God, and as distinguished a devotedness to his glory. It was his meat and drink to do the divine will. Throughout a chequered life, and that spent in a court—and such a court! never once did he allow man to usurp the place of God in his estimation, or self the place of self-consecration for the good of others. As a prophet, most of what he foretold is clear, precise, and easy to be understood; as a believer, all his history is luminous and lovely—a light in a dark place; and as a man, his whole life is a lesson on the sublimity of true piety. Well does the name of Daniel deserve to be ranked with those of Job and Noah; and in some respects he is superior to them. Immortal prophet! long years to thee, though years of exile, were years of honour. Such a life of more than fourscore years! We crown thy brow with laurels, thou prophet of the court; we commend thy life to the study of all who love the nobility of excellence, in every age; and we fearlessly foretell that, as the world advances, thy predictions will become more and more interesting! Let the young mark the virtuous youth of Daniel; let the middle-aged observe his spirituality as supreme over the highest secular avocations; and let the aged contemplate and admire his godliness, his patriotism, and his power, throughout a long and laborious life. Worn out with age in the service of his king, his country, and his God, at last he had nothing to do but to die. What lackedst thou, O thou man of God, on Jordan's brink? To such an inquiry the prophet must have replied, "*Aliud nihil, nisi cœlum*"—"Nothing more, unless heaven." Who then would not exclaim, in the sight of such a translation, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his?" Happy Daniel! long hast thou realized the promise made to thee by him who was clothed in linen, "Go thy way; thou shalt rest." "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." Well and wisely do they labour, who are always anticipating the rest to come!

JONAH,

THE PROPHET OF REPENTANCE

JONAH AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

JONAH the prophet was the son of Amittai, a native of Gath-hepher, a town of Galilee. Though he has been placed the fifth in order among the minor prophets, he is generally considered to have been the most ancient of them all, Hosea himself not excepted. As early as the reign of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, we have his labours recognized. Wicked as this king was, yet we find him doing some things according to the bidding of the servants of the Lord. He followed the evil example of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. Still he loved his country, though he forgot his God; and in order to strengthen it against the attacks of its enemies, we read that "he restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand (or instrumentality) of his servant Jonah." Two views are taken of this testimony. Some interpret it to mean that the prophet lived in the days of Jeroboam, and personally delivered to him these instructions from God—an opinion which would make him cotemporary with Amos and Hosea: and others maintain that this was a prediction delivered by him in a preceding reign, and fulfilled in the days of this sovereign; thus concluding that he was the oldest of all the prophets. We incline to the former opinion. It is quite clear that the learned arrangers of the canonical books, whilst they may not have given

Jonah his precise place among the inspired writers, still did not consider his claims to precedence from antiquity so stamped and certain, but accorded to him a position in which the divine lessons of his life and labours were best calculated to impress and to instruct. He stands between the denouncers of the sin of Israel, on the one hand—sin demanding repentance; and the restoration of the Jews from captivity, on the other—a favour which called for gratitude and deserved praise.

As we have been obliged to select from the minor prophets those whose predictions were best adapted to our object; nevertheless, we feel that our aim would be incomplete, were we to pass them by altogether unnoticed. A brief glance, just here, at those who are placed in Scripture between the prophet of the court, whose history we have reviewed, and the mission and ministry of the prophet of repentance, which we have now selected for consideration, would appear to be appropriate. The first of these is HOSEA—most generally understood to have been placed immediately after Daniel, not simply because of his claims to be esteemed one of the earliest of the minor prophets, but also because the prophecies in his book are the largest in number and most important, with the exception of Zechariah, of any prophet who lived after the Restoration. Hosea was the son of Beeri. Nothing is known of his history, further than that "the word of the Lord came to him in the days of Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and in the days of Jeroboam II., the son of Joash, king of Israel." From this statement we learn that he was nearly coeval with Isaiah, and that he continued his labours for about seventy years. As his predictions were largely directed against the sins of the ten tribes forming the kingdom of Israel, so it has been supposed that he was either a native of or resided in that kingdom. Some Jewish writers allege that he

was of the tribe of Reuben, confounding his father with Beerah, a prince of that tribe, who was carried into captivity by Tiglath-pileser; others consider that he was of the tribe of Issachar: but we have no good reason for adopting either of these conjectures. Bishop Horsley thinks it a mistaken notion that the denunciations of Hosea, contained in his prophecies, are directed alone against the ten tribes; and argues that his great theme is, in unison with that of all the prophets, the guilt of the people of God in general, in their departure from him. He holds that there is a remarkable patriotism about Hosea, and that, unlike many of the other prophets, in his writings he never turns aside to record divine judgments against other nations, or to antedate the rise and fall of coming empires; but that all his time, all his ability, all his inspiration, is devoted to the people of God. The blessed subject of redemption itself is little referred to by this prophet, his country and kindred filling his whole heart. Their sins bring down his condemnation, their sufferings his compassion, and their prospects of future exaltation his gratitude. As has been observed, his style is pointed, energetic, and concise. He deals frequently in mere hints, so laconic and sententious is he; the consequence of which is, that he is often obscure. Besides, the very fact that his prophecies were delivered during so long a life, under different kings, and called forth by such distant and differing circumstances, may account largely for the difficulty, which is so generally confessed, of fully unravelling all his allusions and intimations. Yet there is an uncommon force and expressiveness, as well as pathos, about many portions of his predictions. This is especially discoverable where, as in the ninth chapter of his book, he refers to the love of God to Israel, presented under the name of Ephraim, as well as in the closing portion of his prophecies, where he describes the goodness and mercy which he was ready to display towards his people,

on the occasion of their return to him. The allusions of Hosea, we have intimated, to Christ and his work, are few; yet those which he makes are most valuable. He predicts the call of our Lord out of Egypt, the introduction of the Gentiles into the Church, the resurrection of Christ on the third day after his death, and his final victories over death and hell. His prophecies in all are contained in fourteen short chapters.

JOEL is made to succeed Hosea, and was his fellow-labourer. This prophet was the son of Pethuel, and, according to some accounts, was of the tribe of Reuben. He is said to have been born in Bethhoron, in the territory of Benjamin, between Jerusalem and Cæsarea; but no particulars are recorded of his life. Some have assigned to him a later period than that of Hosea; but most writers agree that he lived during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II., king of Israel. An ancient author relates, but with what certainty we cannot determine, that he died in peace at the place of his nativity. The style of Joel is always pleasing, copious, and clear—at times energetic, animated, and sublime. His subject is the condemnation of Israel's idolatry, and the willingness of the Lord to forgive them, if they would but repent and return. His prophecies are included in three chapters, which are in reality three discourses. In the two first the strength and beauty of prophetical poetry are displayed, in announcing judgments and in inviting to penitence, prayer, and fasting. In these, the descriptions of the plague of the locusts, of true national repentance, and of the happy state of the Christian Church in the last days, are inimitably given. The last chapter is not confined to Israel, but has reference also to Tyre and Sidon—with a general proclamation to the Gentiles, intimating the blessings which yet await the nations, and which must come from Zion, the true Church of the living God. When this takes place, then, our pro-

phet informs us, the enemies of Israel shall be laid low, and the kingdom of heaven be established—then the mountains of Zion shall drop new wine, her hills flow with milk, and her rivers with water.

Some suppose that AMOS the prophet was the father of Isaiah. Others contend that he was a native of Tekoah, a town in the territory of Judah, adjacent to a desert of considerable extent, where he was a herdsman. He appears never to have been in the schools of the prophets, or to have received any regular education, but was expressly called and commissioned by Jehovah; he too laboured contemporaneously with Hosea, and during the reign of the same kings in which Joel prophesied; his predictions extend to nine chapters. Bishop Lowth considers him nearly equal to the very first prophets in elevation of sentiment and grandeur of soul, and scarcely inferior to any of them in splendour of diction and beauty of composition. Many of his figures are immediately drawn from the scenes in which he was engaged: but he uses them with great skill, and applies them to his purpose with felicitous power; he does not confine himself in his prophecies to the condition of Israel, but also describes the doom of surrounding nations. No prophet has more sublimely revealed the lofty character of Jehovah, more unmercifully exposed the sensuality of the worldly, or more indignantly condemned injustice and oppression. No particulars of his history, or of the time and manner of his death, are known; but the works of no servant of the Lord more justly demand or truly deserve a pious and prayerful perusal.

The prophecies of OBADIAH are all contained in one chapter; they are entitled his "vision." They consist of two parts—the one referring to the destruction of the Edomites, for their pride and cruelty to Israel; and the other to the victory and prosperity of Jacob. It is not known where Obadiah was born, or when he flourished.

Some Jewish writers think, that he was the same Obadiah who was the controller of Ahab's household, and who met with Elijah; others assert that he was that Obadiah whom good king Josiah made overseer of the works of the Temple; others, that he was cotemporary with Hosea, Amos, and Joel; and some have sought to prove that he laboured with Jeremiah after the taking of Jerusalem. Du Pin inclines to the opinion that he lived in the days of Ahaz, during the period when the Edomites joined the ten tribes against Judah; and hence his prophecy is so entirely directed against Edom. Nothing certain concerning him is known. His "vision" is a discourse of much beauty and descriptiveness, conveys a valuable lesson against worldly pride and cruelty, and nobly exemplifies the security of Mount Zion, the mountain of the Lord's house.

And now we return to Jonah, the prophet of repentance. In entering upon his history, it is scarcely possible to be too deeply impressed with the truth that every man who comes into the world has a work to do in it; and that it is his truest happiness and highest honour to watch God's providence in regard to his mission, and faithfully to follow the divine guidance. Much sorrow had our prophet been spared, had he walked according to this rule. But the faithful portraitures given to us in Scripture, are beacon-lights, set up for those that live, to enable them to escape the shoals and quicksands which have been so ruinous to others. They are wise who listen to those who, though now dead, yet speak; who instruct by their examples, and warn by their failures. Our meditation on the history of Jonah will have accomplished its purpose, if we can only induce those who peruse our pages rightly to appreciate life's responsibilities, and fulfil its duties.

JONAH'S FLIGHT AND FAILURE.

The city of Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. It was built upon the banks of the river Tigris. Some allege that it was founded by Asshur, son of Shem; others, by Nimrod, son of Cush; and others, by Ninus, who is supposed to have given to it his own name. When it was commenced cannot be precisely determined; but it must have been among the earliest cities built after the dispersion at Babel. It was not only one of the most ancient, but most famous and powerful cities of the world. At the time of its greatest extent and glory, Diodorus Seculus calculates, that it must have been about seven leagues, or twenty-one miles long; three leagues, or nine miles, broad; and eighteen leagues, or fifty-four miles, round. Its walls were a hundred feet in height, and so wide that three chariots could drive abreast upon them. Its towers, of which there were fifteen hundred, were each two hundred feet high. We do not suppose that these walls encircled the city at its greatest extent; still they must have surrounded a large space of ground, and enclosed an immense multitude of human beings. At the time when Jonah was sent to it, we are informed that it contained more than one hundred and twenty-thousand persons "who could not distinguish their right hand from their left"—that is, young children not arrived at the age of reason; and as children make generally one fifth of the population, it is concluded that it contained above six hundred thousand souls. Long was Nineveh the mistress of the East. The sacred writers make frequent mention of its kings, more especially of Tiglath-pileser, Sennacherib, and Shalmanezer. Tobit lived in this city. As Babylon rose in importance, Nineveh lost its power. It was first taken by Arbaces and Belesis, under the reign of Sardanapalus, and in the time of Ahaz, king of Judah; it fell a second time before Astyages and Nabo-polassar,

after which it never recovered its former splendour; it was entirely ruined in the time of Lucian of Samosata, who lived under the emperor Adrian. It was rebuilt under the Persians, but was destroyed by the Saracens in the seventh century. Of late years, the ruins of Nineveh have been carefully surveyed by several travellers of eminence, especially by Dr. Layard and Major Rawlinson, and many of its magnificent remains have been brought to England and placed in the British Museum, many parts of which, strikingly illustrate and verify portions of Old Testament history.

The commission of the Lord to Jonah was to visit this city. It was in these words: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." Rashly, however, the prophet refused to obey this divine command. He went down to Joppa, an ancient seaport on the shores of the Mediterranean, in the territory of the tribe of Dan, thirty miles south of Cæsarea, and forty-five north-west of Jerusalem. Here he found a ship which was about to sail to Tarshish—supposed, in this case, to indicate Spain. He immediately secured a berth in this vessel, paid his fare, and went on board, thinking to flee "from the presence of the Lord." They sail, the recusant prophet lulling his soul to rest as they bid adieu to the shore. Vain expectation! He who owns the earth, governs the ocean; the dry land and the sea are both alike the Lord's.

The precise cause of Jonah's dislike to execute this commission is not stated in the narrative, but the deepest reason is found in his depraved heart—in his dislike to obey his God. Periods of rebellion there are in the lives of the best men; happy it is for them when the season is short, when grace overcomes the evil, and the cause of God suffers no injury. Away, then, thou vessel of Tarshish! set thy sails and speed thy flight; hasten with Jonah—hurry him from his God: from above he looks

down and pities the vain attempt—"thus far shalt thou go, but no farther." The sea, as yet, lies like a sleeping, powerless infant around the vessel. Gazing on the ocean in its calmness—a sea of glass—who would ever think that it was capable of such fury, could be so rocked and riven, and could, so like a giant beast of prey, shake its mane, and roar and foam? But the mildest are often the mightiest powers; in the same person may meet the meekness of the lamb and the majesty of the lion.

Satisfied with his flight—sailing safely from land, the waves calm—Jonah goes to the side of the vessel and falls fast asleep. What a strange thing is the human conscience, and by what easy shifts and mock excuses does it become satisfied! Fleeing from God, fleeing from duty, external circumstances apparently favouring his flight, Jonah can go to sleep. But it shall be a broken one—"there is no rest, saith my God, to the wicked;" and in this case, this inspired man had ranked himself with the rebellious against the Lord. Blow, ye winds, for Jehovah has said it; roar, thou sea; rise, ye waves, and rock this vessel; blow, even to fury; roar in the extremity of rage; rise mountains high—higher and higher still; louder and more furiously roar; shake like a thing of naught this ship of Tarshish! The mandate has but to go forth, and the material world yields to his word. The sky is covered with darkness, the sea is lashed by the storm, every soul on board the vessel trembles at the thought of instant death—Jonah alone excepted. Horror-stricken at the impiety of such indifference, the very sailors go and awake the sleeping prophet, and bid him prepare for his end "by calling on his God, if that God will think upon us, that we perish not." The impression instantly pervades the whole crew that there is some one on board the ship fearfully wicked, against whom the wrath of God is being displayed; and they prepare to cast lots, in order to discover the evil-doer.

The lot is drawn; it falls on Jonah. They look upon him with amazement, and inquire into his history—Who art thou? What is thine occupation? What hast thou done? Jonah tells them that he was a Hebrew, and that he feared Jehovah, the Creator both of the land and sea. He then informs them that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord. They become the more afraid, and ask why he could do this. What a rebuke, and coming from heathen sailors, to one who was a prophet of the true God!

And now, the cause of the danger being discovered, the inquiry is as to the cure. They ask of Jonah, "What shall we do unto thee?" His stolid conscience is now aroused; he feels his guilt, and prepares to meet its punishment. "Take me," he says, "and cast me into the sea, so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Yet these sailors were humane men—they dreaded to destroy life; and they rowed all the harder, to bring, if possible, the vessel to land. Sailors are proverbially thoughtless men on land—full of folly, and, alas! too often sin, after their long voyages; but in all ages they have been, with equal truth, regarded as warm-hearted, brave, and kind. Ah! what a pity, that they who were the first called by our Lord, who conveyed to us the first missionaries, and who are now so largely the administrators of our comforts, the guardians of our homes, the promoters of our commerce, and the transporters from land to land of God's truth and servants, in order to the world's conversion, should have so long been neglected and left without the means of salvation! Greatly do we rejoice in the efforts that are now being put forth to evangelize sailors; speedily may the means be crowned with success, that our ships may become floating schools and churches, and the visits of our mariners to other countries be visits of mercy, conveying Christianity as well as commerce: then, by the ceasing of sin,

shall it cease to be said, "There is sorrow on the sea." Humane men, we have said, were these sailors of Tarshish, and wished to save Jonah, but they could not. More and more the waves raged and the wind blew; they had reached the last extremity. Something must be done: either Jonah must be thrown overboard, or all perish. The prophet must go—life is dear. But they could not thus save themselves before they had entreated his God to forgive them. Sailors have often been called superstitious—it may be so: but superstition is only man's religious nature misdirected, uninstructed, and unsanctified. Even this is encouragement to labour among sailors—this is a source of hope. Superstitious or not, we cannot but admire those men who struggled to the last to save this offender against Jehovah; and, when they could no longer save themselves, implored forgiveness lest they should be taking innocent blood. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging; then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows."

Jonah has not yet "fulfilled his course;" and, sinner as he was, still he is in the hands of him who is the Saviour. The prophet is cast out of one vessel, in order to be caught up and kept safely in another. The flood did not come till Noah's ark was prepared; fire and brimstone were not showered down on Sodom before Lot, his wife, and children, were safely out of it; before Jonah is thrown into the sea, the Lord has a great fish near at hand to swallow him up, and in due time land him safe on the shore. We stop not to ask whether this sea monster was created on purpose by God for this one work, or whether it was a whale or shark. Suffice it that we know that he who formed the earth and sea, and all that is in them, might have done the former if it was required, and that in a moment; and also that he could bring up to the vessel's side, at

the instant when the storm raged, and from any part of the ocean, either of the latter, whale or shark, to swallow Jonah. Nay, more, we know, as Hartwell Horne remarks, that "many of the shark species are not only of a size so large as to be able without a miracle to swallow a man entire, but also that men have been found entire in their stomachs; and since it is a fact well known to physiologists that the stomach has no power over substances endued with vitality, this fact will account for the miraculous preservation of the prophet Jonah in the belly or stomach of the great fish, in which he was for three days and three nights." Away, then, in thy new vessel, thou rebellious prophet! learn obedience in it. Around thy head let the sea roar; hasten into the caverns of the deep; let the sea-weed gather and flap about thy new and strange home. Onward for three days and nights! live and be conscious all the while! What thoughts—strange, wild, unknown, unfelt before—must have been his! What new mental combinations in this new retreat! But no! throughout this period one being alone absorbs his soul —and that one is, his God, the God of his mercy, his sparing and saving God; and in one of the most devout, self-abasing, descriptive, and divine odes ever penned, entitled Jonah's prayer, and contained in the second chapter of the book which bears his name, we have both our prophet's experience and employment in the whale's belly. He required no prayer-book in his novel temple in the deep; what he felt, he found words before God to utter—and this is true prayer.

Now the season of his bondage has ended; the third day has dawned. This living vessel hastens near the shore. A special providence directs this ship. In a moment, and without an injury, Jonah is cast upon the land; a moment more, and his deliverer is gone. What were his feelings as he now found himself on the earth, it were vain to attempt to describe. He is not long

permitted to sit in a state of amazement; the word of the Lord once more comes to him, bidding him to arise, to go to Nineveh, and to preach as God had commissioned him. He can no longer withstand the divine command. He had been marvellously instructed and miraculously saved. With all the volume of his experience, with all the solemnity of a man rescued from the jaws of death and the gates of hell, "so Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey."

JONAH'S OBEDIENCE AND SUCCESS.

The period in which the prophet was detained in the belly of the "great fish," was unquestionably typical of the time in which a crucified Redeemer was to remain in the grave. Our Lord himself intimates to the unbelieving Jews, that "no sign should be given to them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." But how vast the difference of the occasion of the death of Christ, and the punishment of Jonah! Jonah sinned and therefore suffered; Christ bore the sins of others, laying down his life a ransom for many. Both were delivered from the bonds of their different graves on the third day—Jonah, to become convinced that God was with him and must be obeyed; and Christ, to show to the universe, by his resurrection, that all he said, all he did, and all he claimed to be, were stamped with the seal of the divine approbation. Jonah was strong when he obeyed; Christ conquered when he died and rose again. Behold him, part of whose history our prophet was permitted thus to typify, above sea and land, life and death, proclaimed to be "the Son of God with power." Hear his own account of himself—"I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell

and death." Let us learn at the feet of Christ, from the history of Jonah, how truly obedience is connected with success.

It would appear, that at the time when the prophet entered Nineveh, it was a city of awful sinfulness. God says of it, that "its wickedness was come up before him." In all ages, great cities have been the scenes of fearful forgetfulness of the Most High. Men become each other's tempters. They will do in masses what they would shrink from thinking of attempting when alone. This becomes tenfold more truly the case, where, amidst crowds, opportunities are afforded to them for being sinful without being known. Hence the accumulated vice, seen and unseen, of our large cities. But then the guilt of Nineveh was aggravated, sanctioned, developed under idolatry, and with the possession of wealth And what can one do among so many? One to preach to six hundred thousand! Well has it been said, that we may write a whole line of "noughts," and then place the figure "one" after them, and it will only stand for one; but if we place it before them, it may stand for as many millions. When Jonah was fleeing from his God, he was that solitary figure *one;* when he was obeying the Lord, his position was changed, and he was strong to influence six hundred thousand. When we serve God, "greater is he who is for us than all that are against us."

Thus did the prophet enter Nineveh; and this was his whole sermon—"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Nay, he needed only to go one day's journey into that city which required three to compass it, and his sermon sinks into the souls of the people; the tidings of the terrible preacher enter into every heart; and, from the palace to the hovel, dismay, confusion, and despair, begin to seize upon them. Not a moment is to be lost. Even the king rises from his throne, moved by the language of this heaven-sent mes-

senger; he proclaims a fast, and orders "that neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, should taste anything—that all should be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to the Lord—that they should turn from their evil ways, and from the violence that is in their hands; if haply God may turn away from his fierce anger, and they perish not." The nobles unite with the king in this decree. Amazing spectacle! a whole city thrilled by one voice to its inmost soul, and that by the preaching of the prophet throughout only one day. What a word is the word of man when it is clothed with the power of God!

Nor does Nineveh repent in vain. Never yet have a people turned to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and he has neglected their prayer. He waits to be gracious; he is far more willing to save than we are to pray. It is a happy omen for a country, when both its rulers and subjects are moved together towards God. And at those seasons when he speaks, all ought to listen. Does he warn by pestilence? all ought to be warned; does he bless with abundance? all ought to be grateful. Blessed are the people who are thus actuated—who are not so hardened as to be immovable, and not so absorbed by the world as to forget their God. Down, Nineveh, down in the dust! Cry aloud, confess, and plead for mercy! All are now fasting and praying; and a wonderful sight in a wicked world was the repenting city, Nineveh, as well as a noble example to every land, in every age. The commission of Jonah is crowned with the richest success; and so, too, are the people's prayers. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil"—or rather, withdrew the judgment—"that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." Thus Nineveh became a city rescued by repentance and saved by prayer.

What heart, in hearing of such a result, but would

be ready to exclaim, How joyful Jonah must have been that day! What an instrument of salvation to thousands! What a preacher of life to man! But "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" What a hold self has over the heart! Dreading lest he should be esteemed a false prophet, now that God was ready to show mercy and spare Nineveh, he reflects on the divine forbearance. What! would he rather that all had perished, than that his office as a prophet should be doubted? It was even so. "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." Such was his feeling. O how much that is selfish and worldly, nay, cruel and wicked, is to be found in the human heart! But in his own people the Lord will not permit it to remain unrebuked. In his mortification, the prophet loathed his life, and he cried to God to take it from him. He must be taught better. Alas, how unfit he was then to die! Never are we less prepared to leave the world, than when we wish to be removed from our trials by being deprived of our existence. No: Jonah, away beyond the walls of the saved city, and sit down and reflect! Cover thyself up for the night, rest over the matter, and think. Many a man has been saved from a sad deed by a night's rest.

JONAH'S REPINING AND REPROOF.

It was to the east of Nineveh that Jonah retired. When it is said "he made him a booth," we understand that he raised a fence all around himself, that he might be concealed from the observation of the people and protected from the beasts of prey. Above he was exposed to the elements—to the burning sun by day and the falling dew by night. Here he determined to remain, "till he might see what would become of the city." However much he was sinfully dissatisfied with his God, God was graciously looking down upon him.

In one night he made a gourd to grow by the side of his booth, whose leaves should cover it over, and become a sufficient shelter; "so Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." What this gourd was, is a question which has occasioned much learned research and discussion. The most commonly received opinion is, that it was the "*Ricinus communis*," or castor-oil tree, which, with its broad palmate leaves, extends over the parched traveller a grateful shade. It is described as having leaves like those of the oriental plane tree, but larger, smoother, and of a deep hue. It grows in all the warmer regions of the old and new continents, and flourishes in the driest soil, among stones and rubbish. That Jonah's gourd is identical with the plant described, is confirmed by the fact that it abounds near the Tigris, where it is not an annual, and grows to a very large size.

Under this shelter Jonah was contented to continue; but Jehovah must teach him more of himself, and how to appreciate the mercy of his doings: his shade must be taken from him. The Lord prepares a worm and puts it at the root of the gourd; and, by the rising of the next day's sun, it had smitten it, so that it withered and died. Now all the sorrow of the prophet was turned from Nineveh towards his own misfortune. With the shining of the sun rose a violent east wind. Unprotected, the sun shone upon him and the hot wind blew, so that he fainted. As he came to himself, again he wished, not to live, but die. Ah, Jonah, there is no abiding shelter but in thy Saviour, and no lasting happiness in life but in his love! God has given many a man to possess a gourd; but if he trusts in it, if he rests satisfied with its shade, then he is sure to place a worm at its root, which will make it wither. No booth that we can build, no covering on earth that we can find, will last. "Riches take wings and fly away;" and if they do not leave us, we must leave them. Then, when our refuge is lost, to be exposed to a burning sun and a blasting

wind! To thy God, O Jonah! for he is "an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." "God is known for a refuge," and all who come to him find him a sure abode.

Here one of the most remarkable interviews is recorded, between the Lord and the prophet, to be found in Scripture. Formerly, Jonah was angry at God's mercy in saving a city; now he is enraged with him for destroying a gourd. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" What Jonah said when this lesson was read to him—how he felt and how he acted—we do not know; but it must have covered him with shame and confusion of face. To show the prophet as being sorry, for his supposed honour's sake, that a whole city was not destroyed, and then equally grieved because his comfort was removed by the gourd that covered him withering, is to exhibit human nature in its true light, as radically selfish. This it is which occasions the fearful "fight of faith," in the life of every Christian man. The difficulty is, to bring every thought into submission unto God. This is the spirit's conflict. The true atmosphere of triumph in this struggle is that at the cross, at the feet of the holy, harmless, self-sacrificing Jesus, loving us and giving himself for us. There selfishness is rebuked, the value of the soul is proclaimed, and the condescending love of God to the unworthy is revealed. To live there is to find sin die, God's will become supreme, and the life which we live in the flesh become a life of faith in the Son of God.

We have no authentic information as to any other portion of the history of Jonah. It has been affirmed that he returned to his own country, where he died. A tomb was shown as his, in the time of Jerome, at a place within the tribe of Zebulon, at a short distance from Sepphoris, on the road to Tiberias. Benjamin of Tudela notices it as on a hill near the same place; and Thevenot informs us that the Turks had built a mosque over the sepulchral cave, which they held in such veneration that no Christian was allowed to go near it. Our Lord on more than one occasion refers to the prophet Jonah—to his preaching, and especially to his deliverance. His history is a very instructive one. Amply does it exhibit the folly as well as the sin of withstanding the will of the Lord. As his servants, we are not to choose for ourselves the work we are to do for him. "The servant is not greater than his master, or the disciple than his Lord." He must open up our sphere and prescribe our duty. It is ours to obey; and if we do belong to God, we shall be brought to obedience. Hard may be the discipline, and difficult to bear—still it is saving. Better a thousand-fold be cast over into the sea, and only escape death from the roaring billows, to be brought into perfect acquiescence with the divine will, than to sail in smooth water, with wind and tide in our favour and every worldly engagement prosperous; or, with a heart rebellious against our heavenly Father, to succeed in life. Never ought we to think of Jonah without remembering the sin of spiritual rebellion, and the safety of holy obedience. Wonderful indeed was the forbearance shown to the prophet—not less is the patience of the Lord with us; and he understands little of his own heart, who feels not how constantly he requires to be forgiven. Reader, know and honour your God, rest in his love, obey continually his precepts, and look forward to his appearing; remembering, that "he will come, and will not tarry."

ZECHARIAH,

THE PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION.

MICAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, AND ZECHARIAH.

To render our labours somewhat connected and complete it will be necessary that we cast a momentary glance at the history of those prophets who precede, in the Scriptures, the prophet Zechariah, and follow the prophet Jonah. The mission of Zechariah was more especially to encourage his countrymen, on their return from captivity, to restore Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple; and hence our selection of his prophecies, in order to possess an unbroken history of the Jewish people, and of their political, civil, and religious condition at various periods. From the time of the captivity to the close of the Jewish nationality, a new phase in the prophetical writings becomes manifest—the prophets cease to denounce the idolatry of the Jews. Indeed, the captivity appears to have cured them of this enormous crime; as from that period, however prone they were to backsliding, still they set up no idolatrous worship in preference to the service of Jehovah. Other nations are still condemned and denounced, and so are the people of Israel for their indifference; but now we have heart-searching appeals, blessed promises, a careful enunciation of religious privileges, constant reference to the coming of Messiah, and painful indications of the dispersion of the Israelites because of their rejection of the Saviour. The only exceptions that we can make among the Jews from the above observations,

were a few who fell into idolatry during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, spoken of in the Book of the Maccabees.

MICAH immediately succeeds Jonah. He is the seventh in order of the twelve minor prophets. Micah was commissioned to the prophetical office during the days of Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and hence he was cotemporary with Amos, Hosea, Joel, and Isaiah. He laboured as a servant of the Most High during a period of about fifty-six years. He is called the Morasthite, from the village where he was born, near Eleutheropolis, in the south of Judah. Some writers have confounded Micah with Micaiah, the prophet who is so honourably mentioned in the history of Ahab; but he must have lived at least one hundred and thirty years previously to his time. Micah received his revelations by visions, and fulfilled the duties of his office with great fidelity and zeal. One of his predictions saved the life of Jeremiah, who would have been put to death for foretelling the destruction of the Temple, when it was discovered that Micah had done the same before him. He announced the invasions of Shalmanezer and Sennacherib; the captivity, dispersion, and deliverance of Israel; the destruction of Assyria and Babylon, the representatives of the enemies of the Church; the birth of our Saviour at Bethlehem-Ephratah; the destruction of Jerusalem; the establishment of the kingdom of Christ over all nations; and the blessed influence of his gospel. His style is nervous and concise, sometimes poetical and grand, again abrupt and obscure. He rapidly shifts from one subject to another, rendering it difficult to follow him. But, of all his writings, his account of the reign of peace—when men "shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks —when nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither learn war any more;" with his descriptions of

justice, mercy, humility, and piety, as constituting identical in aim and spirit the Jewish with the Christian dispensation—is by far the most exalted and important. Micah is supposed to have died near to his native village, and to have been buried at Berathsalia, about ten furlongs from Eleutheropolis, where was the prophet's tomb, called by the common people "The Faithful Monument."

Micah is followed by NAHUM. He is called the "Elkoshite;" but it is disputed whether this description is derived from his parentage, or the place of his birth. The latter is the most probable. Jerome says that there was a village in his day called "Helkesi," known to the Jews, and pointed out to him by his guide. It was in Galilee; and if this conjecture is correct, as Dr. Kitto remarks, it affords another proof, in addition to that of Jonah, that the Jews were wrong in alleging that "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." The prophecy of Nahum entirely relates to the judgment of God against Assyria, and its contents show that it was written between the subversion of the kingdom of Israel and the destruction of Nineveh. The particular time in this period may be questioned, but most likely it was immediately after the desolation of Israel. Bishop Lowth thus characterizes the book of Nahum: "None of the minor prophets seem to equal him in boldness, ardour, and sublimity. His prophecy forms a regular and perfect poem; the exordium is not merely magnificent, it is truly majestic; the preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of its downfall and desolation, are expressed in the most lively colours, and are bold and luminous in the highest degree."

Of the prophet HABAKKUK we have no authentic memoir. He is supposed to have been a native of Bethzakar, and of the tribe of Simeon. Some relate that, foreseeing the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar,

he escaped into Arabia, and that he returned to Judea after the city was taken, and employed himself in agriculture. He died, and was buried in his own country, two years before the end of the captivity. His tomb is spoken of by the early Christian writers as being at Bethzakar, Keila, Echela, and Gabbatha—places all near to Eleutheropolis; and not unlikely the tomb was nearly equidistant from them all, and thus each may be mentioned as the point from which each traveller paid his visit to it.

Jerome thinks that Habakkuk laboured at the same time with Daniel, and that he is the same to whom the apocryphal history of Bel and the Dragon is ascribed. The exact period in which he prophesied may not be known; but from his foretelling the ruin of Judea by the Chaldeans—the conquests, trials, and death of Nebuchadnezzar—and the judgments which should follow upon the Babylonian empire—it may be concluded that he was contemporaneous with Jeremiah. The style of Habakkuk gives him a high place among the poets of Scripture. The song or prayer with which he concludes his book is one of the most perfect specimens of the Hebrew ode. Its being written upon "Shigionoth" indicates that it was intended for music; and the word "Selah" being so frequently repeated throughout it, confirms this opinion, and shows that it was designed to be used in public worship.

ZEPHANIAH, in the first verse of his prophecies, affords us almost all the particulars which have come down to us of his life. He informs us that he was "the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah;" and that he prophesied "in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah." Epiphanius relates that he was of the tribe of Simeon, that he was born at a place called Mount Sacabatha, or Bathaca, and that there he died and was buried. Others maintain that he was buried at Geba, in Lebanon.

The composition of Zephaniah is animated and impressive, as well as poetical; but is neither distinguished for beauty nor elegance. When he refers to the idolatry prevalent in his time, his denunciations greatly resemble those of Jeremiah. He appears zealously to have co-operated with good Josiah in bringing back the people to the worship of the God of Israel.

HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, and MALACHI, are the three prophets of the restoration. Haggai was born during the captivity in Babylon; when, returning to his country with Zerubbabel, he was the first to receive the spirit of prophecy, in order to encourage his countrymen in rebuilding the Temple. In consequence of the intrigues and interference of the Samaritans, with other obstructions to the edict of Cyrus, the work had now been interrupted nearly fourteen years.

The whole of the two chapters, containing the prophecies of Haggai, consist of reproofs on account of the negligence of the people in building the Lord's house, encouragements to greater activity in the hallowed work, and promises of greater glory to the second Temple than had been possessed by the first. Bishop Lowth considers his writings throughout as prosaic; whilst Archbishop Newcomb translates them as admitting of a metrical division. Most assuredly, portions of them appear to us poetical. Epiphanius relates that Haggai died at Jerusalem, which most probably was the case, and that he was buried among the priests.

We are thus brought to the life and writings of Zechariah, whom we have designated "the prophet of the Restoration," and selected because of the extent, minuteness, and importance of his predictions. He was "the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet." He was one of those who returned to Jerusalem at the close of the captivity. When he commenced his prophetical labours, he appears to have been a young man. In the year B. C. 520, we find him with the prophet

Haggai, assisting Zerubbabel, and Joshua the high priest, in animating the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the great work of rebuilding the Temple. To this all his writings are directed. We shall now have occasion more minutely to investigate his visions. His book divides itself into two parts—the first containing the first eight chapters; and the second, the remaining six, which from their style and subjects seem to us to have been written near to the end of his life, when his mind was more mature, and when the state of things in Jerusalem was greatly altered. How long Zechariah lived, or when he died, is not known. He is generally supposed to have ended his days at Jerusalem; and in the valley of Jehoshaphat there is still pointed out to travellers a tomb which is called "the tomb of Zechariah, the prophet." So similar in style is he to Jeremiah, that the Jews considered that the spirit of that prophet had passed into that of Zechariah; and so highly were his predictions esteemed, that he was called "the sun among the lesser prophets." There is much vigour in the predictions of this prophet, and well are his visions worthy of a careful perusal.

ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECIES DURING THE REIGN OF DARIUS.

The edict of Cyrus had gone forth, and the captive Jews had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, led by Zerubbabel, and accompanied by Joshua, the high priest. As yet leave had not been granted to them to build the Temple. The Samaritans had interposed, desiring that they might be permitted to share in the undertaking. Being a mixed race, the descendants of the Israelites who remained in Judah after the captivity had commenced, intermarrying with the Gentiles from the neighbouring parts of Assyria, Zerubbabel and the other Jewish rulers negatived their request. This led to a lengthened controversy, to inveterate hostility, and

to much bloodshed. The feelings of men are more intensely awakened by their religion than anything else; and hence the heat of religious animosity and the bitterness of religious dissension. Never was this more fully shown, than at this period in the history of the Jews. For a long time the Samaritans intercepted the privilege to the Jews of restoring the Temple; and even when they were allowed to build, they were compelled to do so with the sword in one hand, and the trowel in the other. Hence the hatred, for centuries, which existed between the Jews and Samaritans, kept alive by the latter raising a Temple for themselves on Mount Moriah. It was Darius, the son of Hystasper, twenty-nine years after the edict of Cyrus, who by decree allowed the Jews to erect their second Temple. During the second year of the reign of this king, Zechariah delivered the first series of his predictions, contained in the first six chapters of his book.

The aim of Zechariah, in this discourse, he is careful to reveal. He reminds his countrymen of the sins of their fathers, and of the sore displeasure of the Lord against them. He appeals to them to return from every wicked way, to serve the living God, and promises that he would return to them and abundantly bless them. He brings to their recollection the certainty of God's word as spoken by his prophets, and his faithfulness in its fulfillment; and by a series of striking illustrations endeavours to arouse the Jews to diligence in the work of restoring both the city of Jerusalem and the house of God, and heartily to engage in his worship and service. The first of these is the vision of "a man riding upon a red horse, and standing among the myrtle trees in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white." "The red horse," in prophetical language, is the emblem of war: the man upon it is said to be "the angel of the Lord"—by Jewish writers interpreted of the angel Michael; and by Lowth, Gill, and others,

applied, and we think properly applied, to the Angel of the Covenant, the Son of Man, the Messiah. He is here represented as a man of war; and truly against the principalities and powers of darkness, against all wickedness, he wages a deadly conflict. Nor is he alone. Others are with him, with horses of different colours—horses which indicate strength and swiftness to obey his will, however varied may be the work; whilst their being under the shades of the myrtle trees, in the valley, shows that they have been busily engaged in executing the divine purpose—are resting, but resting so as instantly to be ready to do the bidding of the Lord. The period in which, in vision, they thus appear to the prophet, is announced as a time of peace, and is generally understood to refer to the epoch after Darius had executed the vengeance of Jehovah on the inhabitants of Babylon, and made himself master of their city. Then the Persian empire, and the other nations connected with Judea, were at rest, but the Jews were unsettled; and hence the intercession in which Zechariah immediately engages, after what he had seen, for Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah, and to which he receives a most gracious answer and blessed promises; for "thus saith the Lord of Hosts, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem."

This vision is immediately followed by another, in which the prophet has placed before him "four horns" and "four carpenters." He inquires of the angel of the Lord as to what they were, and is immediately informed, that "these are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head; but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horns over the land of Judah to scatter it." We have seen that "horns" are powers or kingdoms; and we have no difficulty, after what we

have found in the Book of Daniel, of considering these "four horns" as referring to the four great monarchies —the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman. The "four carpenters," according to our view, therefore are —Nabo-polassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, who overthrew the Assyrian empire; Cyrus, who destroyed the empire of the Chaldees; Alexander the Great, who destroyed the empire of the Persians; and Ptolemy, who rendered himself master of Egypt. Some translate the word "carpenters," inspectors; others, watchmen; and others, workmen: either may be adopted without destroying the sense of the vision. These monarchs were overseers, they were watchmen, they were workmen; but there was One above them all who turned their labours to account in the fulfillment of his own purpose, for the punishment of his chosen people, and also for their fuller instruction and future advancement.

But the city must be rebuilt: this the Lord had decreed. The prophet of the restoration has now his vision of "the man with a measuring line in his hand." He is anxious to know his commission, and whither he was going. Nor is he detained in uncertainty. He is told by the angel that he goes to measure Jerusalem, for it is to be rebuilt, largely to prosper, to overgrow its walls, and spread abroad its inhabitants; but that Jehovah himself should be "a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of her"—the glory in the midst being an allusion to the Shekinah in the holy of holies, or to the pillar of fire in the wilderness; and the wall of fire, to the security from wild beasts which travellers in the desert obtain for themselves, by kindling fires all around their encampments. And no sooner is this cheering prediction given to Zechariah, than he follows it with a call towards the north, or in the direction of Babylon, to all who remained still in captivity, to return at once; and that all the more, because judgment was now to be poured out on the

nations who had so long afflicted Israel. These nations are seen by him to fall, for God has shaken his hand over them. And now, in one of the most joyous of songs, the prophet calls upon Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, to sing and rejoice; for not only was blessing to come upon her, but through her upon many nations —a work so wonderful and glorious, that in very amazement all flesh is commanded to keep silence in admiration of the doings of the Lord. Beyond the Temple, beyond Jerusalem, beyond the holy land, the prophet realizes the kingdom of the Redeemer established throughout all the world.

The next vision recorded by Zechariah is a remarkable one. Under the type of Joshua the high priest, resisted by Satan "the grand accuser," and Joshua's victory in the name of the Lord, we have a representation of the trials and triumphs of the Church. The place where Joshua and Satan meet, is in the divine presence. Jerusalem is the subject of dispute; long has it suffered, sad has been its sin, and hot the furnace of its affliction; but it is not to be burnt up, "it is a brand plucked out of the fire." Joshua appears, clothed with filthy garments—expressive of the low and evil condition into which the Jews had fallen, by neglecting the worship and service of their God; the priests having lapsed into idolatry, and the people having followed them in their iniquity. But a happier time had come—Satan is rebuked by the Lord in his own name, not in that of the priests or people; the filthy garments of Joshua are not ordered to be washed, but altogether taken away, and new robes put upon him, and a fair mitre placed upon his head: for a new era had dawned, in which the transgression of the people was to pass away from them. Now Joshua receives from the angel an animated description of the character and blessedness of this promised age; it is to be a period of solemn covenanting in the service of the holy God, the people giving them-

selves to him, and he returning and blessing them. This is connected with an instructive promise of the advent of Messiah, under the emblem of "the Branch," and of his work under that of a stone having seven eyes—showing him to be the wise and sure foundation of the Church; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Living in him, the true vine—built on him, "the chief corner-stone"—all iniquity is removed; and when the nations come to this rock, and are founded on it, then is represented the beautiful vision as realized, of an universal brotherhood—"every man neighbour to his fellow man, under the vine and under the fig tree." Here Zechariah's prophecy, closing the third chapter, becomes a record of millennial glory.

In the fourth chapter we have brought before us, the striking and instructive allegory of the golden candlestick and the olive trees. This is the record of them; he looked, and behold! a candlestick all of gold, made with one stem and seven branches, with a lamp on each branch, and a bowl at the top of the stem; and the olive trees grew on either side of it, one on the right side and the other on the left, pouring their oil into the bowl, and constantly feeding the golden lamps. Zechariah inquires into the meaning of these symbols. First, they are referred to the condition of Jerusalem and Judea; to the mountain of difficulty being removed before Zerubbabel, not by human, but by divine power; and to the prosperity of the secular and spiritual state of Judea, as set forth by the light being continually cherished and sustained. But next, and more especially, the golden candlestick represents the true Church, a light in a dark place, and a light ever fed by Him who superintends all the secret operations and affords from nature all needed supplies to the children of men; and who, as he makes the olive tree yield its oil, and the apple tree its fruit, the earth bring forth its corn, and the

ocean yield its fish, so is he the author of all the spiritual resources of his Church and people. The two olive trees feeding the seven lamps, we conceive, are the two great dispensations of divine grace—the law and the gospel; and the light burning through both, that unity of truth pervading them, and through the reception of which men have ever been led to live to God. No doubt but Zerubbabel and Joshua may be regarded in connection with their immediate day and work; but the other and wider application of the olive trees is both the truer and surer word of prophecy.

Almost all the predictions of Zechariah are visions; these, as he advances, multiply in every chapter. In the fifth and sixth we have, *first*, his revelation of "the flying roll, in length twenty cubits and in breadth ten cubits." It is covered with curses, and is spread out over the face of the whole earth. These "curses" are judgments denounced against the Jews for indulging in the sins of swearing and stealing; judgments, which are to burn with fire the houses—that is, sorely punish the persons and families—of those who so transgress. Well may the lovers of iniquity mark this warning and dread such inflictions: "Be sure your sins will find you out." *Then* we have the vision of the ephah; with a woman representing wickedness as sitting upon it, and a talent of lead lifted above both. As he looks, the woman is cast into the ephah, its lid is shut, and the lead is placed upon it to hold it down. Immediately there come forth two women with wings; they are borne upon the wind, and carry with them the ephah. The prophet, inquiring, is informed that a house is to be built for it in the land of Shinar. The woman, a type of wickedness, being shut up in the ephah, and held down by the talent of lead, shows that sin has its limits, and that God permits it so far and no farther; by their very sins teaching his people where alone they are safe. The Jews had filled up their measure of guilt, and were

lifted up from their own land and punished far away from it. Now the ephah is carried away from Judah to Shinar—that is, Babylon—the two women signifying Assyria and Babylon, and intimating judgment as transferred from Judah to these her enemies. *Next* we have his account of the two mountains of brass, and the four chariots coming forth from between them. The first chariot was drawn by red horses, the second by black, the third by white, and the fourth by grisled and bay horses. These chariots speed their way as the four winds of heaven; the black horses to the north, the white following them, and the grisled and bay to the south country. Here we have, once more, the ancient idolatrous kingdoms which oppressed the Jews; the mountains of brass showing that they were called into existence by the immutable decrees of God, and their being typified by chariots stamping their warlike character. The red horses bespeak the bloody Babylonish empire; the black horses going to the north, the Jews in their captivity; the white horses following after them showing the approaching victorious march of Alexander in establishing the Macedonian empire; and the grisled and bay going to the south, the conquests of the Romans in Egypt, often spoken of as the south country. The chariot with the red horses is not described in its movements, because Babylon during the captivity had reached its height, and was actually overtaken with destruction.

Again Zechariah returns in his predictions to Jerusalem. When in Babylon, the captive Jews had been employed in all manner of handiwork. Among the rest, they worked in gold, and silver, and brass; some, too, had brought both gold and silver with them back to their own land. Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, had done so; but what the Temple needed he must be willing to surrender. Heldai of Tobijah, and Jedaiah, both returned captives and artificers, were commanded to go and take of Josiah's gold and silver to make two

crowns, and place them on the head of Joshua, the high priest. This was accomplished; and afterwards they are laid up as a memorial in the Temple, under the guardianship of Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. When Joshua was thus crowned, the prophet again receives a most refreshing intimation of gospel times—of him who is the Branch, his building the Temple and receiving the glory; his exaltation to his throne, and his sitting and ruling "a priest upon his throne." Then does he witness all that Jerusalem required to be realized, when they who are afar off come and build up the Lord's house, and they who are nigh know and honour the Redeemer. Joshua, in this vision, as the name imports, is the Saviour, the great high priest of his Church, of whom Joshua the high priest of old was but a type; and the two crowns were emblematical of the kingly and priestly offices of Christ.

During the fourth year of the reign of Darius, the prophet received from the Lord the predictions which are recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters of his prophecies. This was about two years after the laying of the foundations of the second Temple. The work appears now to have taken hold of the hearts of the people; still it does not progress to their satisfaction. They send a deputation of their number to consult with the priests concerning a national fast. Zechariah seizes upon the circumstance to rebuke them for their past transgressions, when in a similar manner they professed to serve the Lord; and in one of the most thrilling paragraphs of his book, places before them that line of conduct which Jehovah alone approves, in contrast to that condition of indifference which sin superinduces upon the soul, and when the law of God is disregarded and its voice is silenced. Such a state is sure to be followed with severe punishment.

The eighth chapter is a song of success. The Lord promises to return to Zion, the Temple is to be built,

the city is filled with inhabitants and the streets with children, men are converted to the Lord, the blessedness of gospel times is foretold. With the coming in of the Jews is to follow the fulness of the Gentiles; and the world, turning to the Church, is to say, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Nowhere is the furtherance of the truth of God among the nations more laboriously taught than by this prophet, in these diversified visions. Jerusalem is first instructed; "the new Jerusalem" is also certainly typified. And how earnestly does Zechariah pour heart-stirring truth into the minds of the people, both for time and eternity! With line upon line and precept upon precept does he warn, instruct, and entreat them. With visions of coming glory does he win their attention and draw forth their energies. So ought all the servants of the Lord to labour. The time is short. Cold philosophy will not call up the heart's deep feeling, or move the soul's strong power. We must have something more vivid and fascinating; illustration upon illustration—experience, truth, and fact, all elaborated, enforced, and applied. Indeed, the doctrines of Scripture are all facts in Christ, spoken by his lips and exhibited in his life. Every event in God's providence, and every principle of his government, is life-producing; this is the glorious purpose of them all. Onward in this life-work, O ye ministers and servants of the Lord, till the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of Christ; till his Church become "the new Jerusalem," to which all nations go up; till the song of earth become the song of heaven, and the joy of the world be only the antepast of the blessedness of eternity!

THE CLOSING PROPHECIES OF ZECHARIAH—THE COMING OF CHRIST—HIS REJECTION BY THE JEWS, AND THEIR FINAL RESTORATION.

Age has its own advantages. It gives maturity to the judgment, ripeness to the experience, vividness and strength to faith, consolidation to the character, and nearness and power to eternity and eternal realities. It clothes with a peculiar relish Christian hope, and encircles everything connected with Christ and his kingdom with the radiant atmosphere of a holy satisfaction. The very compositions of age differ from those of youth. There is a solidity about them which seems to say—life is retreating, we have much to do, and a limited season in which to accomplish it. They may lack many of the graces of earlier productions, and much of their fire; but they possess far more of the ringing metal of right thought and compact logic. Every word has weight, every sentence wisdom. Men learn as they advance in years, that life is not sustained by flowers, but nourished by fruit; and that barley meal is better than blossoms. Age tames the imagination, and tones down the fancy, but gives insight to character, a knowledge of the world, and leads to perfect confidence alone in God.

It has been thought, and, we imagine, correctly, that the later prophecies of Zechariah are the productions of age. There is an elevation about them, a reference to the future, and a desire for the highest order of prosperity for his country, which betoken the spiritualizing influence of an approaching eternity. Circumstances, too, had altered in Jerusalem in the course of years. The Temple had been finished, but the priesthood had become depraved. Events also of great interest were occurring in the history of other countries—their sins were being visited with punishment; and the prophet could not be silent about the state of his own people, and dared not be otherwise than faithful in warning

and instructing them. To prepare his way, he begins by declaring "the burden of the Lord" on the land of Hadrach and Damascus, portions of Syria; on Hamath, Tyre, and Sidon—especially against Tyre, with all her wealth and strength. And so terrible is this judgment to be, that "Ashkelon is to see it, and fear; Gaza, and to be very sorrowful; and also Ekron;" and these cities of the Philistines are to be ruled by foreigners and peopled by strangers; but amidst all these convulsions Jerusalem is to dwell safely, and her Temple to flourish. Nay; on the heels of this good news still better ones are found to tread. A king is promised to Zion, "lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," who is to destroy the battle-bow in Israel, to speak peace to the heathen, and whose dominion is to reach from sea even to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Well may the prophet, in the name of the Lord, address the oppressed and say, "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day will I render double unto you." And congratulating Messiah, well may he add, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Men need to be warned continually against idolatry, for their very mercies are apt to become their gods. Especially is this temptation near when a faithful ministry is not enjoyed. It often happens, that when God is angry with the shepherds, he has also occasion to punish the flock. Zechariah, thus early after the captivity, feared for the people, because he discovered the ungodliness of the priests. He exhorts, therefore, in the tenth chapter, that they look to the Lord for their mercies, consult him alone, and disregard all other gods besides him. On the supposition of their doing so, victory is promised to the Jews over their enemies; and which was actually accorded to them, in the days of the Maccabees, over the princes of the Grecian monarchy.

But this, we think, was only a typical triumph, and the completion of this prophecy yet remains to be realized in the restoration of the Jews. Whether they are to return to their own land in these last days, or are only to be restored by being brought to a saving knowledge of the true Messiah, is a question which has been much disputed. We believe that they are yet to be gathered from all countries into their own; and in that very Jerusalem where Jesus was put to death, the descendants of the same people shall have the veil taken from their eyes, and he shall be acknowledged, loved, and honoured as the Prince of Life.

The eleventh chapter is a most solemn prophecy. It is full of threatening—foretells the ruin of the Temple and city of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the dispersion of the Jews, by the rejection of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Even their distinguished men are to perish: "Howl, fir tree, for the cedar has fallen." The city is to become a heap, and the Temple a ruin; the towns and cities are to become desolate, and the fields to remain uncultivated. The people are to be scattered over the surface of the earth—for great is to be their sin; even their Saviour is to be sold to his murderers for thirty pieces of silver. How literally this prediction, with all connected with the dispersion of the Jews, has been fulfilled. Surely God's ancient people are a living monument of the truth of his word. All he has said regarding them, as far as their history has been unfolded, he has fulfilled. This will be even more abundantly demonstrated in their ingathering than it has been in their rejection. The world will again be taught, that there is a God in Israel.

The three remaining chapters of the book of Ezekiel contain a series of predictions, and constitute one discourse. These prophecies are generally referred for their fulfillment to gospel times. The former part of the twelfth chapter announces the preservation of Jeru-

salem against a frightful invasion in the latest ages of the world, and appears to be identical with the conflict of Gog, of the land of Magog, against Israel, described in the thirty-eighth and the thirty-ninth chapters of the prophecies of Ezekiel. Spiritually, it contains a prophecy of the defence, protection, and security of the Church of God from all its enemies. The latter part consists of an account of the repentance and sore grief of the Jews, because their fathers had crucified the Saviour. The thirteenth chapter "opens a fountain in the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness;" and this, by setting at naught the malpredictions of the false prophets, by the coming of Christ, by the smiting of the Shepherd, by the gathering of a remnant, and the open acknowledgment by the Lord of his people, by saying "It is my people," and they by professing that "the Lord is their God." Again, in the fourteenth chapter, as in the twelfth, the overthrow of the enemies of Israel, the enemies of the Church of God, is predicted; the final conversion of the nations is announced; Jehovah is proclaimed king over the whole earth; "holiness to the Lord" becomes the banner-inscription of all lands; and the sacred vessels, yea, and the pots of Jerusalem and Judah, are to become holiness to the Lord; everything is to be sanctified by religion, and men are to find an occasion of being religious in everything—"Sermons in stones, books in brooks, and God in everything." What a heaven on earth will be enjoyed then! So far now as Christianity has done its work, mind has been strengthened, society has been elevated, man has been made happy, nations have been blessed, and God has been glorified. Let the whole world be so influenced, men become righteous, and, most assuredly, we shall have a "new heavens and a new earth." The prophet of the restoration anticipates for our world this hallowed consummation.

To close our meditation on Zechariah and his predictions, without a glance at his character and writings, would neither be fair to ourselves nor just to him. To say he is obscure in some portions of his book, is only to affirm what is more or less true of all the prophets. Many of their prophecies are yet to be fulfilled—no wonder they are not now understood; but in due time all will become transparent. God is his own interpreter, and he will make them plain. The notion that the last three chapters of the book of Zechariah were written by Jeremiah, in our opinion confutes itself, both by the language in which they are couched, and the allusions which they contain: they all appertain to the age after the captivity. The prophecies of Zechariah are the most numerous of all the minor prophets; most assuredly they are the most evangelical. Indeed, he appears to delight in referring to "the last days." In his early life, well did he sustain the spirit and animate the efforts of his countrymen in the restoration of the Temple; in his last years, strikingly did he foretell the coming and character of Messiah, how he should appear, and what he should suffer. Ah! and he has told us of "the stronghold," and bid us "turn" to it. Doubtless this was his own "secure abode." Long has he found its safety and realized its excellence. In heaven, for ages, has his spirit been with the Saviour. He is with the Angel of the Covenant; he is with the patriarchs and prophets of the Lord; he is with the apostles and martyrs. Glorious company! chosen society! What revealings in your communion—what blessedness in your fellowship! "What we know not now, we shall know hereafter." Forward, ye who are "followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promises!" Soon the welcome will be given to you—"Well done, good and faithful servants! enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Then, too, shall your eternal home be that of the elect of the universe!

MALACHI,

THE PROPHET OF THE SECOND TEMPLE.

MALACHI, AND NEHEMIAH THE TIRSHATHA.

We are come to the last of our "evenings with the prophets"—our meditation on Malachi. It has been doubted whether the name Malachi ever indicated a real person. It appears that the phrase "Malach-Jehovah," "the messenger of the Lord," was one at the time generally applied to a prophet. Origen held the absurd opinion, that Malachi was an incarnate angel; others have attempted to identify him with Mordecai; and many Jewish writers have maintained that he was Ezra. Others consider the book to be anonymous, but that the author was a man distinguished for his angelic disposition and saintly character. All that is certainly known is, that Malachi, whoever he was, is to be viewed as the last of the Old Testament prophets. Zechariah prophesied during the building of the Temple, and in the days of Zerubbabel; Malachi refers to the Temple as having been for some time erected. Indeed, the nature of his predictions, the state of things which he describes, the sins which he condemns, and the coming glory of the latter Temple by the appearance of Christ in it, which he announces, all show that he flourished in the days of Nehemiah. The prophet exactly narrates the affairs which were occuring during his governorship; and by this name does Malachi designate him at the commencement of his predictions (Mal. i. 8).

Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, was the son of Hachaliah, and was born at Babylon during the captivity. He was,

according to some, of the race of the priests; and according to others, of the family of the kings. The latter is most likely to have been the truth; at all events he belonged to a family of some distinction. He was, as the title Tirshatha imports, "cup-bearer" in the court of Babylon. This office he held under Artaxerxes Longimanus. He loved the land of his fathers, and longed to visit it. From time to time his heart was smitten with sorrow, by the accounts which reached him from Judea. This was peculiarly the case on an occasion when he was visited by some Jews, who had just returned from Jerusalem. This led him to humble himself, to fast, and to pray to the Lord, for the prosperity of Zion. In this downcast condition he appeared before the king. His look led Artaxerxes to suspect some evil design; but Nehemiah explained the cause of his grief, and leave was granted to him to journey to Jerusalem, to repair its walls and gates. He arrived at Jerusalem with letters of accredited power, but was three days before he revealed the occasion of his visit. On the night of the third day he went round the city and inspected the walls. In the morning he assembled the chief of the people, produced his letters, and exhorted them to undertake the work of restoration; which was immediately begun. The enemies of the Jews only scoffed when they saw the commencement of this attempt; but as the walls began to rise, they began to threaten Nehemiah. He therefore ordered a portion of the people to continue armed behind the walls, and the others to build with their arms near to them. Stratagem after stratagem was used for the destruction of Nehemiah, but he defeated them all; and in fifty-two days the walls were raised, the gates were hung, and the towers were completed.

A dedication of remarkable solemnity followed this finished work. Now a more important undertaking fills the heart and hands of the new governor. He called

together the princes and the priests; and separating them into two companies, ordered that the one division should proceed to the south, and the other to the north, on the top of the walls. They then met at the Temple, accompanied with music, vocal and instrumental. It was the season of the feast of tabernacles. The law was read, sacrifices were offered, and the hearts of the people were filled with joy. Much of the city within the walls being still uninhabited, he commanded that the chief of the nation should there fix their abode; and caused them to draw lots, by which a tenth of the whole people of Judah were obliged to live at Jerusalem. He proceeded to reform such corruptions as had crept into the management of public affairs; he curbed the inhumanity of superiors to their inferiors, whom they treated as slaves; he restored to many families the inheritance of which they had been deprived; he dissolved such marriages as had been contracted with strange and idolatrous women, whom he sent away; he enforced the payment of tithes for the support of the priests; ordered that the Sabbath should be strictly observed; and exhorted the priests and Levites to be devoted to the duties of their high calling. To perpetuate all this, he induced the chief men of the nation to renew their covenant engagements before the Lord—all of which they did, both priests and people ratifying it.

One thing Nehemiah still lacked. The holy fire, which had burned night and day on the altar in the Temple, before the captivity, the priests had concealed in a dry and deep pit. Anxious fully to restore the service of the Lord, he commanded that a search should be made for it; but finding nothing in the place where it had been hid but a thick and muddy water, he sprinkled this upon the altar. As soon as the sun began to shine, the wood which had been so sprinkled took fire—which circumstance, it is said, having reached the ears of the king of Persia, he caused the pit where

it had been hidden to be enclosed, and granted great privileges to the priests. Nehemiah established a library in connection with the Temple, placing in it such books of the prophets as could be found, or of such princes as made presents to the house of the God of Israel. He now revisited Babylon, as he had promised to Artaxerxes, in the thirty-second year of his reign; but afterwards returned to Jerusalem, where he remained and died, having governed the people of Judah about thirty years.

This sketch was necessary, in order to a proper understanding of the prophecies of Malachi. It brings before us a succinct view of the circumstances in which he was commissioned to labour, and the object for which he was sent. To show the people that attention to the external forms of religion was not enough; to warn them not only to covenant, but also to keep their engagements before the Lord; to regard the spirituality of all true religion; to remember the great end of all trials and all success, as leading to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and to keep in mind the coming of the Lord to his own house—appear to have been the special burden of this prophet's mission. His predictions in all are contained in four short chapters, dividing themselves into two separate discourses; and are full of evangelical truth and gospel expectations.

MALACHI AND HIS MINATORY PREDICTIONS.

So far as the mechanism of a reformed State was necessary, Nehemiah had assuredly prepared and inaugurated such instrumentalities in the midst of Israel. But more is required. What were the most perfect engine, unless it were possessed of and moved by the powerful steam? Men may vow, but the great matter is the fulfillment; they may covenant, but the serviceable part is the keeping of the covenant. Scarcely had

this new era been introduced, before the people began to murmur. They even questioned the love of the Lord towards them. Hence Malachi commences his labours by a bold onslaught upon this ungodliness. He pointed out how God had loved Jacob, and hated Esau—that is, had preferred Jacob to Esau, and now he bids them test the value of this election by looking at the condition of the two nations descended from them, Israel and Edom. The latter was in a state of absolute dejection and want—saying, indeed, "We will return and build the desolate places;" but the Lord was against them. Therefore he says, "They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." In contrast to which he shows, that he will magnify himself in his people, and that they shall be glorified in him.

With all this distinction, all this paternal attachment, on the part of God, how wonderful it is that they neglected his love and disregarded his service! Nor was this the case merely with the people, but also with the priests. Thus the Lord had to complain of all of them, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if, then, I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" Even in the sacrifices which they presented, they offered polluted bread and defective lambs, the lame and the sick. All they did was for hire; and when they worshipped it was a weariness to them. No wonder, therefore, that the prophet should declare to them that "the Lord had no pleasure in them, and would not accept of offerings at their hands." Then, as if turning with disgust from such a spectacle of ingratitude, in vision Malachi beholds the coming kingdom of the Redeemer, its vast extent, and its noble character, and thus describes it: "From the rising to the setting sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among

the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts." And let it be great, O thou Lord of Hosts! is thy Church's prayer; speedily, O speedily, let it be known and honoured to the ends of the earth!

A fearful evidence of a country's decline and disfavour before the Lord, is a sinful and mercenary priesthood. If the ministers of the Most High are not faithful men, little can be expected of the people. If the shepherds neglect the flock, the wolves will be sure to find their way into the fold. The second chapter begins with an awful warning to the priests. He summons them to repentance, he invites them to right-minded service: and then he puts before them the fearful alternative of the blessing or the curse—the blessing of the favour of the Most High; or, that of their very blessings becoming a curse, their children becoming corrupt, and their services becoming their shame. To induce them to fidelity and a participation of mercy, a delineation of the character of Levi, their father, is placed before them, and a most instructive and pleasant picture it is. The law of truth was in his lips, the law of love in his heart, and the law of holiness in his life. He walked with God in righteousness and peace, and turned many from their iniquity. A complete contrast was this to what they were—without truth, and departing from the ways of the Lord, secularizing the covenant of Levi, and making many to stumble. A most instructive portion of prophecy this is, especially to the ministers of God. Well may they look on both descriptions, for they are drawn by the pencil of truth, and accord with fact. No man has more power to be useful than a Christian minister, and no man, being inconsistent, is more capable of extensive injury. And then to answer for all to God! "It is expected of a steward that he be found faithful." No office is more honourable or

useful; but "unto whom much is given, of him much shall be required." "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."

We have mentioned elsewhere, that partial as the tendency of the Jews was to literal idolatry after the captivity, yet that it did manifest itself among some of them during the time of the Maccabees. Malachi refers to this bias on the part of the people, connected with the sins of idolatry and infidelity, in his day. In fact, infidelity is a sure step to superstition, if not to idolatry. Man is made to be religious; and the moment he attempts to expel from his heart a belief in the true God, he begins to look around for another idol. The nature of man is positive, not negative; hence he never rests in a mere negation. Let him withdraw his belief from the existence of the true God, and he cannot stop there: he will be sure to fall into some form or other of superstition, or become the slave of sin; the latter he will devoutly follow, even as he would worship Deity. This was precisely the tendency of the people of Judah, which Malachi combats at the close of his second chapter. They began in their state of peace to disregard as well as disbelieve "the God of judgments;" they attached themselves to strange gods; they committed sin by marrying the daughters of the heathen, or would not separate themselves from them; and thus they stood in the way of a full and blessed realization of that reform, both in Church and State, which had been so nobly commenced by Nehemiah.

Nothing is more sure than that true religion, to become the living possession of a people, must be the result of their own cordial and voluntary acceptance. Laws may be made to secure for them a Sabbath, provision may be made to sustain in their midst a priesthood, orders may be issued to require attendance on the ordinances of God's house, and an external observance

of the decencies of religion may be enforced; but the result of all is but a "name to live." Men are not mere machines. All the wisdom of the world can never construct a saint-factory. The heart must be moved, then all the life will follow. Jehovah alone can change the heart. Proclaiming his truth, looking up to him, and praying for his Spirit to accompany his word, we have his own promise that "it shall not return to him void, but that it shall prosper in the thing whereunto he hath sent it." Perish, then, all mere resting in the external ceremonialism and support of true religion! We must have something more and better. Holy men as ministers; churches constituted of those having claims to be considered Christians; freedom to prophesy; and ministers and churches together, prayerfully, perseveringly, and in the fear of the Lord, marching forward to the world's conversion.

MALACHI AND THE MESSIAH.

When a person of note travels, he generally sends before him a courier or messenger, to proclaim his approach, to prepare his way, and to make ready for his reception. Under this figure, Malachi, at the commencement of the third chapter of his book, announces the coming of the Saviour by referring to his messenger, who was to prepare the way before him. This prediction was literally fulfilled in John the Baptist, who proclaimed the coming of the Lord, and testified to Jesus as the true Messiah. Anticipating hundreds of years, the prophet Malachi speaks of him as suddenly coming to his Temple. And though for centuries his appearance was expected, at last he came upon the Jews when they were very unprepared. When he appeared, and trod the aisles and worshipped in the courts of the Lord's house, that second Temple, inferior to the first in architectural perfection and costly ornament,

was then rendered by far the most glorious. The mind is greater than its own production—man, than the house he builds for himself; so was the Lord greater than his Temple. Before his light the Shekinah paled and passed away; in his person the Levitical priesthood was abrogated; at his death the vail of the Temple was rent in twain; and through his finished work the way to the Holy of Holies was thrown open. The glory of the second Temple was, that Immanuel, God with us, appeared in it, when he came "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness."

We have said that many of the people were unprepared for the coming of Christ; in fact, multitudes would not receive him. The doom of this rejection the prophet predicts, and announces the true character of his work in the world. He is to sit as "a refiner of silver." As, in the preparation of the silver, the artificer sits over the fire and watches the precious metal till he discovers that it is so purified as to reflect his own image, and then removes it from the furnace, so the Saviour, in his school of the world, places his own people for their sanctification, till through his grace they bear his own likeness, when he removes them into his immediate presence. This is the great design of salvation-work among men—transforming them into new creatures in Christ Jesus. So, also, he is to labour as a fuller with his soap, which restores soiled garments to their original purity. Thus, as the fire purifies the precious metal from the dross; as the soap cleanses the filthy garments, making them wholesome and white; so, spiritually, the gospel of Christ in the world is to separate the righteous from the wicked, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. This is what is needed both by ministers and people—a process which, while it cannot fail to save some, must condemn others; for to neglect this blessing, is to remain in all manner

of sin. But the holy Lord must hate iniquity; and against all who indulge in it, our prophet informs us, he is a swift witness—against adulterers and sorcerers; against false swearers, and the robbers of the hireling's wages; against the oppressors of the widow and the fatherless, and all who turn aside the stranger from his right, and who fear not the Lord. "Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

It has long been a question of considerable difficulty with Christian people, at what rate, according to their means, they ought to give to the cause of God. In the New Testament this matter is left entirely undecided, and is thrown on the extent of obligation under which the believer feels himself placed to his Lord. It is clear that our charity ought never to fall below a tenth of our income. Under the Jewish economy the rule was fixed to a tithe; and surely they who are favoured to live under the better dispensation, the dispensation of grace, ought not to devote less to the cause of their Master. They ought to do more; and the fact of its being left optional with the individual, does not mean that he is free to give as little as he may, but, being placed on the ground of gratitude to his Saviour, the believer ought to esteem it his highest honour and his richest earthly privilege, to do what he can. The Jews, during Malachi's time, were beginning to neglect the paying of their tithes. This the prophet loudly condemns. It is true, he does not enjoin that their payment is to be enforced by pains and penalties; he pleads a higher motive and records a more blessed promise—for thus saith the Lord, "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and in offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house; and prove me now herewith, saith the

Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Such a promise as this, we should have thought, would have been sufficient to induce to the fulfillment of this and all other divine duty. But no; they declare it to be "vain to serve the Lord, and not profitable to keep his ordinances." Never were a people more blessed, and never a people more ungrateful than the Jews; and yet their history is but the history of the development of depraved humanity—for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

The vital principles of true religion, to become strong, must be constantly exercised in waging a war against this depravity within us; and this cultivation must not be merely in our individual nature, but also in our social. Where our temptations are strongest, there our piety is to become most powerful; these lurk not simply in the heart, but grow into manhood in the social intercourse of the life. Here is the struggle, here also must be the strength; and from him who asks in faith, grace is never withheld. If in social life sin grows strong, so by social intercourse religion is greatly helped. Soul meets soul; heart beats with heart; common sympathies call forth common smiles, and tears, and prayers; experience encourages experience; and souls are warmed and quickened Godward, till the song of earth becomes as the song of heaven. Hence Malachi cheers the remnant in Israel in their religion and intercourse, and records it for the instruction of all generations, that "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." It will be

well for the world when the followers of Christ are more united; nay, when they are all one, even as Christ and his Father are one; and when they meet, not to quarrel, but to pray—not to gossip, but to serve the Lord—not to be satisfied with what they have attained, but to long for enlarged communion with God and greater conformity to the Saviour.

That believers may trust the Saviour fully, and love him continually, the Spirit seems to strive in Scripture, to present him to the minds of his people by every variety of emblem. Heaven, earth, and sea, are ransacked for similes in which to commend him to our unchanging regard. Is it a stone? he is the chief corner-stone; is it a way? he is the living way; is it bread? he is the bread of life; is it water? he is living water; is it a friend? he sticketh closer than a brother; is it a star? he is the star of Bethlehem; is it a sun? he is "the sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings." And these are but a few of the forms in which we find ourselves encompassed by the Saviour; as if God would, if possible, not permit us to forget him. Now, whatever Malachi may have meant by the "healing of his wings" —whether the life-giving influences of his beams, or a certain refreshing wind which at sunrising is enjoyed in some hot climates—this, at least, is obvious, that he meant to set the Saviour before them as the giver of life, the healer of disease, and the source of righteousness; and, as if he were at hand, Elijah the prophet is announced as coming to prepare his way. Now, at the close as at the commencement of his predictions, our prophet introduces the forerunner and recommends his Lord. And truly, John the Baptist had the spirit and decision of Elijah—"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Malachi commences his first chapter, by announcing Christ as coming to save; he closes, in his last chapter, by reminding the

world that he will come to judgment. And whilst the effect of his coming, as his messenger is represented as saying of him, is, that "he shall turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children," so does he intimate the importance of doing so now—"for, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all the wicked that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." O to be prepared for the appearance of the Lord, the judge! for his decision is a final one; and he who is acquitted by him must be approved for ever by the whole universe. This is to be justified—this is to be saved.

Here our review of the last of the Old Testament prophets must terminate. There is associated with *the last* of everything a tinge of sorrow, a feeling of melancholy. The last labour of love, the last hour, the last word, the last look, the last sigh, the last breath—we have but to name these, to feel their sadness. Parting comprehends a large source of all our earthly pain. But why such gloom? The promised meeting presents an unending prospect of felicity. Beautiful, and to the Christian, blessed, as are the ties of this present life, there is yet a better world to be revealed. There, are "the spirits of the just made perfect," the church of the firstborn, angels and archangels, and God the judge of all. Death cannot enter there, doubt cannot dwell there: there, there is no night. Glory encircles every brow, light illumines every spirit, joy entrances every heart, in heaven. There, friendship is perpetual, and happiness knows no end. What a place is heaven—the glorious residence of God! what society in heaven—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and redeemed ones out of all lands! what a life is the life of heaven—without weariness and without pain! and what employment

there—night and day, without ceasing, celebrating the praises and adoring the perfections of the thrice-blessed Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer! Evenings with the prophets on earth, the pious often find to be heaven below. But to be with them and with their Lord! Hallowed hope! happy they, parents and children, masters and servants, pastors and people, rich and poor, who are "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus."

Around you, O reader, the long shadows of the last evening must speedily gather! Be ready for their fall. Then, to you, in entering the portals of glory—though feeling unworthy, yet saved in Christ—the glowing picture of the poet of "The Course of Time" will become a reality—

"And now, on wing of holy ardour strong,
Higher ascends the stranger, borne upright—
For stranger he did seem, with curious eye
Of nice inspection round surveying all—
And at the feet alights of those that stood
His coming, who the hand of welcome gave,
And the embrace sincere of holy love;
And thus, with comely greeting kind, began:

Hail, brother! hail, thou son of happiness!
Thou son beloved of God, welcome to heaven,
To bliss that never fades! thy day is past
Of trial, and of fear to fall. Well done,
Thou good and faithful servant! enter now
Into the joy eternal of thy Lord.
Come with us, and behold far higher sight
Than e'er thy heart desired, or hope conceived.
See, yonder is the glorious mount of God,
'Bove angel's gaze, in brightness rising high.
Come, join our wing, and we will guide thy flight
To mysteries of everlasting bliss,
The tree and fount of life, the eternal throne
And presence-chamber of the King of kings.
But what concern hangs on thy countenance,
Unwont within this place? Perhaps thou deem'st
Thyself unworthy to be brought before
The always Ancient One? So are we too
Unworthy; but our God is all in all,
And gives us boldness to approach his throne."

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